

DOSTOEVSKY'S VIEW OF THE "INTELLIGENTSIA" IN 19TH CENTURY

RUSSIA:

A STUDY OF HIS MAJOR NOVELS

by

BARBARA CLAUDIA SCHIEFER

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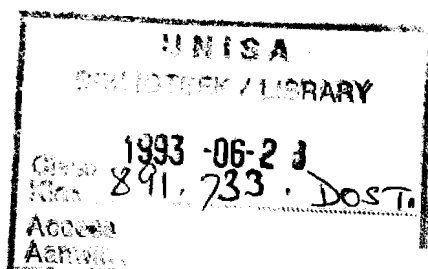
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: MRS A KRZYCHYLKIEWICZ

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SUMMARY

Fyodor Dostoevsky is often regarded as a proponent of the rights of the poor and downtrodden in Russian society in the 19th century. This view is usually based on the work of his youth - his first short novel and his early short stories. An examination of his major novels - all of which were written during his mature years between 1861 and 1879 - shows, however, that his views were far removed from those of the progressive members of Russian society of his day (the "intelligentsia") and that his opinions became more reactionary with advancing age. By the time of his death in 1881, Dostoevsky had long been an opponent of democratic ideals and a keen supporter of the autocratic regime of Tsar Alexander II.



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Introduction

Fyodor Dostoevsky is generally regarded as one of the great Russian novelists of the 19th century. His work provides profound insight into the structure and philosophies of Russian society in his day, focussing as it does on the interaction between the various social classes. Dostoevsky's descriptions of his characters - who hail from all strata of society - have often been called exaggerated and even referred to as caricatures. They do, however, convey to the reader a profound picture of the complexities of 19th century Russian society, and provide a fascinating glimpse of daily life in a country on the verge of a major upheaval. Against the background of the political history of Europe in the 19th century, Dostoevsky managed to paint a vivid picture of the realities of Russian life.

His work may be generally divided into two periods: the first is his early work, written before his exile to Siberia in 1849. His first short novel, Poor Folk, was published in January 1846 and established him as an acknowledged literary talent among the progressive elements in Russian society at that time. This was followed by various short stories and minor works. During his ten-year exile, Dostoevsky did not produce any writings. This period, however, marks the major turning-point in his life. He returned to St. Petersburg in 1859 as a changed man. Not only were the views expressed in his later works more

mature, they were also far removed from the democratic ideals of his youth, and became more conservative as the years went by.

The objective of the work has been to show that Dostoevsky's reputation as a champion of the poor and downtrodden, as established by his earliest works, is undeserved, and that in fact for most of his life his sympathies lay with the powerful elements of Russian society. Part I serves as an introduction to the social system prevailing in 19th century Russia and to the role played in it by the intelligentsia. Part II examines Dostoevsky's early work and his own social background. Part III constitutes the main body of the work, in which Dostoevsky's views on and perception of the society of his time are investigated. This task was attempted by focussing on the second period of Dostoevsky's literary activity, i.e. the time of his major novels, written between the years 1861 and 1879. A number of these have been examined in the present work to gauge Dostoevsky's opinion of the progressive and radical "intelligentsia" of his time, and the extent to which his views changed with advancing age. For this purpose, the novels The Insulted and Injured (1861), Crime and Punishment (1866), The Possessed (1871), The Adolescent (1875) and The Brothers Karamazov (1879) were selected, as they best illustrate Dostoevsky's position *vis-à-vis* the "intelligentsia". Some references have been made to his other works, particularly to the

novels Notes from Underground and The Idiot, but also to his journalistic writings, in order to illustrate some salient points.

Dostoevsky saw his role in painting a portrait of the Russian society of his time, and the importance of the intelligentsia as a factor in Russian social and political life did not escape his notice. For this reason, many of the most important characters in his major novels are members of this class. To this end, Dostoevsky's choice and description of some of the major characters in his novel have been examined, as has their speech.

Research related to this topic has been undertaken by, among others, Ward, Dryzhakova, Evnin and Nuttall (see List of Sources). None of the above has, however, focussed on Dostoevsky's view of the Russian "intelligentsia" as such. While Ward discusses Dostoevsky's criticism of Western values and trends in general, Dryzhakova concentrates only on his view of Nihilism. Both Evnin and Nuttall focus on the character of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment as an example of the naive and often twisted ideals of the Russian "intelligentsia" of the time. There was thus scope for some research into the topic of Dostoevsky's impression of the "intelligentsia", its development into a political movement rather than a social class, and the differences between the "intelligentsia" of the 1840s and that of the 1860s.

Part I - The Russian social system in the 19th century and the role of the Russian intelligentsia

1 Russian society in the 19th century

Until Peter the Great forced the unwilling nobility to adopt Western ways and dress at the beginning of the 18th century, European influence on the life-style of even Russia's upper class had been minimal. However, the combination of rudimentary education and a great deal of leisure time led to an unquestioned acceptance of Western values by some members of the nobility, threatening the position of the autocratic Russian rulers. By the end of the 18th century, the alliance between the conservative members of the nobility and the tsar was faced with the opposition of the more Westernised, educated class. This set in motion a reluctant process of reform, interspersed with periods of rigid dictatorship. In addition, the educated nobility was further than ever removed from the great mass of the peasant population, which was still firmly rooted in its traditional way of life.

Although Alexander I, who ruled from 1801 to 1825, had initially wanted to introduce social and political reforms, he became increasingly preoccupied with international affairs and began to neglect his domestic problems. This caused the educated Russian nobility to

become more and more dissatisfied with Russia's backwardness, which they saw as being due to autocracy, repression and the outdated system of serfdom still prevailing in Russia. The war against Napoleon took numerous Russian officers to the capitals of Europe, where they acquired notions of liberalism and revolution. As they had no voice in the political forum, they tended to form secret societies with the aim of ultimately bringing about changes in the antiquated Russian system of government. They envisaged an end to autocracy, with a constitutional government which would abolish serfdom.

When Alexander I died in 1825, these officers saw a chance to implement their ideas by staging a coup d'état. Their disorganised and impulsive rebellion was immediately crushed by Nicholas I, Alexander's younger brother who succeeded him on the throne.

Nicholas I regarded Russian nationalism and the teachings of the Orthodox Church as useful tools for an autocratic government. He therefore encouraged the peasants and the clergy to wear traditional Russian dress and long beards, believing them to be unquestioningly loyal to the tsar. The army, civil servants and students, however, wore uniforms of European design and were forbidden to grow their beards or hair. This further reinforced the growing rift between the educated classes and the peasants.

The wave of popular uprisings in Western Europe in 1948 caused a feeling of panic among the Russian nobility. Fearing for his position, the tsar retreated further into reactionism and tradition in an attempt to contain the damage to his government. Censorship became even stricter than before and the universities were placed under constant surveillance. The political activity of the newly educated classes or "intelligentsia" either ceased completely or was driven underground.

It was in these turbulent times that the young Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky emerged as a fledgling writer.

2 Towards a definition of the Russian intelligentsia

The group of intellectuals which emerged in the 18th century and gradually grew into an independent ideological force became known as the "intelligentsia" in Russia. The meaning of this term has changed several times over the past two centuries, making it difficult to compile a single, all-encompassing definition.

Although today the word "intelligentsia" denotes the white-collar class as a whole, the term originally had a much more restricted meaning. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word "intelligentsia" as the "class of intellectuals regarded as possessing culture and political initiative", which by the middle of the 19th century in Russia referred to those members of the educated classes holding radical left-wing views. At this time, the intelligentsia constituted only a tiny fraction of society.

The historian Michael Pushkin (1968, p. 72) defines the intelligentsia as "a distinct social stratum composed of individuals whose chief means of existence derives from mental labour". He further qualifies this definition by mentioning three characteristics common to the intelligentsia: the complexity of their social origin; the fact that they derived their means of existence from intellectual labour; and their ideological independence

from the other classes of society.

The social origins of the members of the intelligentsia were indeed varied, with some of them coming from the nobility and others from the merchant class, the clergy and the professional classes. Some even emerged from the peasant class. Those "intelligenti" who belonged to the gentry were generally the sons and less often daughters of impoverished landowners who had moved to the cities to enter the civil service. As for the intellectual labour they engaged in, this consisted mainly of writing for the (fairly radical) journals of the time or of teaching. Ideologically speaking, the intelligentsia did not think of itself as belonging to the political and social system at all, but as standing outside it. In his book on the Russian intelligentsia, Philip Pomper (1970, p. 32) describes how its members tried to establish an independent life-style:

At first, that style reflected the habits of an aristocracy. Even when they began to feel a sense of guilt for belonging to a privileged class, gentry members of the intelligentsia did not see much virtue in the life-styles of other estates. As one might expect, they retained a certain amount of snobbishness because of their superior taste, their worldly experience, and their mastery of European culture.

The term used to refer to this mixed group of intellectuals was the "raznochintsy" or "diverse ranks". This was partially due to their varied backgrounds and partially because the trend of urbanisation caused the formerly

rigid divisions between the different "estates" or classes to blur, making it difficult to pinpoint their origin. However, not all educated members of society necessarily displayed radical or revolutionary tendencies.

If Dostoevsky, who gradually came to despise the intelligentsia in his later years, had ever attempted to define the term "intelligentsia", he might well have limited it to those members of the educated classes who engaged in radical political activities, choosing not to spend their time on any useful employment. The members of the intelligentsia he portrayed in his writings tended to be ex-students or the offspring of well-to-do families who did not need to earn their daily bread. Idleness was thus one of the factors he saw as leading towards the fermentation of political protest.

For the purposes of this study, an "intelligent" will thus be defined as an educated member of 19th century Russian society who, irrespective of his social background, regarded it as a mission in life to engage in political protest.

3 The development of an intelligentsia in Russia

The development of the Russian intelligentsia was the result of the prevailing conditions in 18th and 19th century Russia. In his work on the intellectual origins of Leninism (1981, p. 95-96), Alain Besançon states that four basic conditions are necessary to foster the development of an intelligentsia: one is the "existence of a national, organized system of education, with total state control of all the parallel strands of education". The second is the "incapacity of the civil society to impose on its young its own values and 'raison d'être'". As a third precondition he mentions "a crisis of the old régime" and as a fourth "the presence of ideology".

In the Russia of Nicholas I, state control of all aspects of society, and especially of its educational institutions, was considered essential for the maintenance of order. Police surveillance of both people and organisations was commonplace, and the syllabus taught by schools and universities had been standardised. Nevertheless, the system had failed in imbuing the younger generation with a spirit of nationalism and patriotism, particularly since many teachers and university professors were sympathetic to Western ideas. As for a crisis of the old régime, the Decembrist revolt of 1825 had made it clear that political unity was a thing of the past.

The ideology which influenced the development of the intelligentsia was taken over from Western European political and cultural thinking. By inviting foreigners, especially Germans, to Russia as teachers and by encouraging the translation of foreign textbooks, Catherine the Great had laid the foundation for Western influence in the 18th century already. In Western Europe, however, the removal of the authoritarian political system hardly influenced the productivity of the population, which by then had a strong base of individual initiative, enterprise and intellectual life. In Russia, this cultural base was lacking and the state retained complete control until the end of the 19th century. The civil society which developed during that time was therefore based solely on the ideology which the Russian intelligentsia had absorbed from other cultures. The collapse of the political system thus left a gap which was filled by the radical intelligentsia.

As a great many members of the intelligentsia were of noble origin, changes pertaining to the gentry or "dvorianstvo", as it was known in Russia, were of prime importance for the development of the intelligentsia as an independent force. Because Russia was a relatively closed society and only the aristocracy had easy access to higher education, the intelligentsia necessarily had to develop mainly among that class. It can thus be said that the idea of democracy in Russia originated in the upper stratum of society, the

"dvorianstvo".

The growing importance of industry had undermined the financial base of the dvorianstvo, causing widespread impoverishment. Many of the sons of such impoverished landowners were sent to university in the bigger centres to ensure them a place in the civil service commensurate with their social rank. Under the influence of a Western-style education, however, they developed a sense of having a social mission which was stronger than class affiliations and their conservative upbringing.

At university, these young gentlefolk also met with young men from other classes and absorbed some of their ideas. By the 1840s, Russian class structure was being irrevocably transformed. The classes which had traditionally taken the lead - the landowning nobility, clergy and army officers - were steadily declining, and in their place other groups were gaining in importance. Quite unintentionally, the Russian government helped this process along by no longer relying on the landowners as instruments to carry out its policies, but by turning to the administrative bureaucracy for help.

Until the 1850s, most of the intelligentsia was still composed of members who could trace their origins to the Russian gentry, but thereafter it increasingly became, as Monica Partridge puts it in her work on the life of

Alexander Herzen (1984, p. 29), "a class based not on social origin but on commonly held and usually politically progressive views". In fact, the friendship between the social philosopher Herzen (the illegitimate son of a landowner and a peasant woman) and the literary critic Belinsky (who was of non-gentry origin) was a vital link in the development of the intelligentsia as an autonomous group, independent of the social origin, level of education and qualifications of its members. This intelligentsia was, in the words of Partridge (1984, p. 29), "destined to play an important role in Russian intellectual, social and political history".

Another factor in the development of the intelligentsia were the changes which took place in the occupational structure of the Russian labour force. The growing number of bureaucrats used by the government to implement its policies and the equally rapidly increasing number of well-educated but impoverished young men who tried to earn a living through writing and translation caused the ranks of the intellectual labour force to swell. As civil service in the lower echelons of the government's Table of Ranks was invariably linked to an inadequate salary, there was widespread poverty among the urban intelligentsia, which added to the dissatisfaction and sometimes despair of this class. This did not, however, stop them from - as Tschizewskij (1978, p. 173) puts it - "espousing an ideology which was primarily utopian". When the

intelligentsia was finally given a chance to fight for its ideals, it was heavily criticised for "not having its feet on the ground" and for being "incapable of adapting its goals and ideals to reality" (1978, p. 173).

It is thus no coincidence that the most famous of Dostoevsky's "intelligenti", Raskolnikov, the hero (or rather anti-hero) of Crime and Punishment, is the educated son of an impoverished civil servant, whose widow is struggling to support herself and her two children on her meagre pension.

4 The political role of the intelligentsia

In the 19th century, the cultural life of Russia took two principal forms: the journals and the "circles". As the journals were periodically subject to severe censorship, their role in the political development of the intelligentsia was somewhat limited. The "circles", however, were gatherings which took place at private homes and which attracted many members of the intelligentsia. They were, according to Partridge (1984, p. 35), "regarded as a form of social entertainment" and "were attended by the city's leading scholars, writers, artists and intellectuals as well as members of high society and eminent figures".

Some of the circles were formed merely as forums for the exchange of gossip and cynical small talk, while others had a musical or literary bent. The most progressive - and those regarded by the authorities as the most subversive - were, however, the socio-political gatherings at which the calls for political reform became ever louder.

The Decembrist uprising of 1825 shocked Tsar Nicholas I to the core because of the participation of aristocrats and guard officers who came from a privileged background. Every notion of reform was henceforth banished and the introduction of reactionary measures was supposed to put a stop to the influence of Western democratic ideals.

These measures were most effective in the upper ranks of the nobility, causing the intellectual leadership of the intelligentsia to pass to the lower gentry and the "raznochintsy". In his work on the intellectual history of 19th-century Russia, Andrzej Walicki (1977, p. 6) describes how, on the whole, the Russian intelligentsia entered an era in which it despaired of ever achieving political change and its members "shifted their attention from political to philosophical questions":

Under the despotic rule of Nicholas I all political action became impossible; the deep unrest among the educated elements of Russian society became necessarily 'internalized', transferred to the sphere of 'pure thought', and found expression in the intensive search for the meaning of individual and national life.

In those years, the intelligentsia was divided into a moderate and a radical faction, with the moderates taking their more conservative cue from German idealism, whereas the radicals based their ideologies on French utopian socialism and communism. Their ideology led to an uncompromising attitude regarding the state which drove the final wedge between the intellectual paths of the intelligentsia and the government. The radical intelligentsia advocated a complete reversal of the social and political systems. As the harsh repressive measures instituted by the tsar gave them a feeling of moral justification, many members of the intelligentsia no longer felt bound by the laws and moral values of Russian society.

Before his arrest and exile, the young Dostoevsky tended to side with the more moderate faction of the intelligentsia. Although he argued for political reform and the institution of a more Western form of government, he was never in favour of using violent means to bring about these changes. Moreover, he never renounced the Christian value system with which he had grown up. This would have excluded the rejection of common morality which characterised many of his more radical peers.

Nicholas regarded the educational system as the principal factor in the 1825 revolt and took steps to ensure that there would be no recurrence. He now thought it imperative to reinforce traditional class barriers to maintain the existing structure of society, and therefore restricted access to higher education mainly to members of the nobility. This move caused the radical intelligentsia - which by then had developed into an autonomous class, independent of the nobility - to lose all faith in the tsar and his government. The educated elite was embarrassed by the government's political and intellectual isolation from Europe. Furthermore, the inefficiency of the vast Russian bureaucracy made the idea of civil service unappealing and the outdated system of serfdom was no longer in keeping with the ideas of the intellectual elite.

By now it had become essential for a member of the

intelligentsia to show some enthusiasm for bringing the idea of social revolution to the uneducated masses, and to display a critical attitude towards the government. The intelligentsia came to regard itself as the class capable of organising and leading such a revolution.

After the death of Nicholas I and the accession of his son and successor, Alexander II, the serfs were finally emancipated in 1861. This move, however, came too late to stifle the discontent of the intelligentsia with the tsar. The failure of the government to form a partnership with the more progressive elements of society impeded the pace of modernisation in Russia, thus endangering the country's political stability. Moreover, the intelligentsia attempted to form a new alliance with the masses, whom they regarded as potential allies in their opposition to the government. During the 1870s this resulted in a "going-to-the-people" movement, when thousands of members of the intelligentsia went to live in the villages to disseminate the idea of social revolution among the peasants. The movement may be said to have been a dismal failure. The peasants were more concerned with the question of obtaining land than with revolution, and the utopian ideas of the intelligentsia met with disbelief and often with ridicule.

The intelligentsia was thus mainly concerned with gaining a foothold in the political life of the country. Because this option was denied to them by the government and its

retainers, they turned to terror. During the late 1870s, the use of firearms and bombs during protests became more frequent, culminating in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.

5 Literature and the intelligentsia

In its restricted world of the circles, the Russian intelligentsia found its literary mode of expression in Romantic literature and the German literary movement of Idealism. In the 1840s, however, an important change took place in Russian literature. Writers began to adopt the French models of social Romanticism, as represented by authors such as Balzac and Hugo. Society and the political environment began to play a more important role in Russian literature. This was in keeping with the European trend of the time, which was set by authors such as George Sand, Eugène Sue and Charles Dickens. Richard Pipes (1974, p. 277) writes that "literature was the first human activity to break away from patrimonial subservience in Russia".

Dostoevsky, whose first work, Poor Folk, appeared in 1846, adopted the style of social Romanticism. In his later years, however, Dostoevsky was of the opinion that the social Romanticism of the 1840s made it possible for the Russian intelligentsia to delude itself that it was being useful, while it was actually morally complacent and vain. In the words of Joseph Frank (1961, p. 58-59), he called on the members of the intelligentsia "to turn their abstract love of 'humanity', which chiefly served to heighten their own self-esteem, into a concrete act of self-sacrifice directed toward a particular, concrete individual". He gave expression to this point of view in

his 1864 novel Notes from the Underground.

From social Romanticism, the trend moved steadily towards Realism. Popular themes of the time were those of the materialistic society, the minor civil servant, corruption among the bureaucracy, and serfdom. The protagonists of Russian Realism, however, were not all members of the radical intelligentsia. Many of the authors who adopted this style - including Leo Tolstoy - came from the landed gentry, and were quite unable to portray society as a whole in an objective fashion. Their emphasis was on purely intellectual and moral issues rather than on poverty and materialism. In his Introduction to Russian Realism, Ernest J. Simmons (1965, p. 96) states that "if French realism of the 19th century is preoccupied with the greatness and decline of the bourgeoisie, the characteristic concern of the Russian is with the greatness and decline of the landed gentry". Dostoevsky never considered himself a descriptive realist and refused steadfastly to regard the novel as a mere documentary. His aim was, in the words of Alex de Jonge, to create "a picture more profound, more accurate than that of any realist" (1975, p. 51).

The late 1840s also saw the development of the "Natural" school in Russian literature. Although the same trend existed in Europe, and especially in France, French "Naturalist" writers dealt with the advent of capitalism

and the bourgeoisie, which had not reached Russia at this time.

One of the most important themes of the "Natural" school in Russia was that of the low-ranking civil servant. This trend had been begun by Gogol some years earlier, and the young Dostoevsky was eager to join his fellow authors of the time in elaborating upon it. His first three works, Poor Folk, The Double and Netochka Nezvanova, are all about petty clerks. The hopelessness of their lives, afflicted by, as Leonid Grossman (1974, p. 538) puts it, "madness, illness, fear, rejection and early death". Nevertheless he soon found that the "Natural" style made it impossible for him to give his characters enough spiritual depth, and abandoned this school for that of Realism.

Another theme of the "Natural" school in Russia was that of serfdom. Combined with an interest in the new societies of Western Europe, this marked a turning point for the Russian intelligentsia, which recovered from its despair and feeling of hopelessness (Andrew, 1982, p. 67).

Another literary forum for political activity were the journals and newspapers of the time. An increasing number of university graduates no longer looked for work in the civil service, but tended to turn to journalism (Pushkin, 1968, p. 76). The journals provided the intelligentsia

with at least the hope that their ideals might have some effect on real life. As they were subjected to heavy censorship, however, the frustrated intelligentsia finally turned to political conspiracy.

In his biography of Dostoevsky, Leonid Grossman (1962, p. 228-229) discusses the split among the intelligentsia as far as their attitude towards literature is concerned, stating that its members either supported the view that literature should be useful, or that literature should exist solely because it is beautiful. Dostoevsky, it appears, was between the two parties. He believed that creative freedom, leading to unlimited possibilities in literature, was of most benefit to mankind (Grossman, 1962, p. 229):

Dostoevsky, who always brought together irreconcilable extremes in his political and religious views, did so in his aesthetic views too. ... In this peculiar manner did Dostoevsky combine the two opposing views on the essence of beauty to produce a synthesis of his own: beauty is useful simply because it is beauty, without any preconceived goals.

Thus he aimed at heightening the reader's awareness of the world around him by drawing accurate and detailed verbal pictures of society. At no time, however, did he attempt to preach dogma through his literature solely for the sake of educating his readers.

Part II - Dostoevsky's early life and work as a background to his major novels

1 Dostoevsky's youth and family

Although Fyodor Dostoevsky's family had once belonged to the nobility some generations ago, that rank had been lost when his ancestors refused to convert to Catholicism. The family had gradually become impoverished, and the writer's great-grandfather and grandfather were poor priests in the town of Bratslav. His father, on the other hand, became a medical doctor in the service of the tsar and ran the Mariinskaya Hospital for the Poor in Moscow, where Fyodor Dostoevsky was born on 30 October 1821.

Dr. Dostoevsky was a social climber, striving for respectability in all respects and intent on regaining the noble rank which his family had lost. In 1828 his wish was granted, when the tsar restored his title for his service to the state. Like many writers of this time, Fyodor Dostoevsky was thus a member of the service nobility. In his biography of Dostoevsky, however, Geir Kjetsaa (1987, p. 7) stresses the following:

It is important to emphasise that the service nobility was of a significantly lower rank than the old landed aristocracy to which Tolstoy and Turgenev belonged. Awareness of such class distinctions was to be painful for Fyodor, who was no less preoccupied with rank than his father. The struggle for social status in his home certainly played a role in sharpening Dostoevsky's empathy for human suffering - not suffering that stemmed from the pain of poverty

itself, but from the humiliation of being of a lower social rank than the rich and powerful in society."

Along with the noble title came the right to own property with serfs. In 1831 Dr. Dostoevsky bought a small estate of five hundred acres with seventy-six serfs. From spending his summers in the country, Fyodor Dostoevsky henceforth gained some experience of peasant life, which was to colour his writing for the rest of his life. He always admired the simple peasant for his acceptance of his lot and for his ability to live a Christian life.

Similarly, the winters he spent at the Mariinskaya Hospital for the Poor made him aware of real suffering, a recurring theme in his later works, in which he described suffering as a result of poverty, imprisonment, illness and death. Moreover, the urban environment in which he grew up provided him with material for his later portraits of city life and social ills.

In January 1838, Dostoevsky was enrolled at Engineering School in St. Petersburg quite against his will, but completed the course in August 1843. At first he entered government service as a draughtsman but, as his father had died in the meantime, he now felt free to pursue his own goals in life. At the age of 23 and encouraged by the literary critic Belinsky, he abandoned his position to devote himself entirely to writing.

2 Dostoevsky's early work as a portrait of Russian social structure

During the first period of his literary activity in the 1840s, Dostoevsky wrote articles for the "St. Petersburg News". This work gave him new insight into the life of the poorer people of the city and he developed a special affinity for portraying what Grossman (1962, p. 53) refers to as the "moral outcasts" of St. Petersburg. He was particularly fascinated by the figure of the minor civil servant, his poverty and his despair at being an insignificant and quite unnoticed cogwheel in the huge state machinery. It was at this time that he adopted the "Naturalistic" technique of writing which, however, did not prevent him from portraying his characters as dreamers and romantics.

His first short novel, entitled Poor Folk, was published in January 1846. Stylistically, his technique of writing a novel in the form of correspondence between his two main characters was rather outdated, but it did make it possible to develop the personal relationship between the orphaned young seamstress Varenka and the middle-aged copying clerk Makar Devushkin to its fullest extent. The theme of the "little man" was not a new one, writes Kjetsaa (1987, p. 45). "In contemporary Russian literature there were dozens of works in which the protagonist was a poor St. Petersburg clerk; the theme was beautifully

realized in Gogol's The Overcoat ..."

For both Varenka and Devushkin, life centres around their striving for human dignity in a world which regards them merely as tools. For Varenka, life is a constant struggle to subsist on her meagre wages as a seamstress and to fend off the necessity of marrying, not for love but only to be financially provided for. Devushkin, on the other hand, lives in constant fear of losing his position and with it, his only means of income. When he is rebuked by his superior for leaving out a line when copying a document, he is devastated.

The critic Vissarion Belinsky, a man of much influence in the literary circles of St. Petersburg, gave Dostoevsky's first novel a rapturous review. Kjetsaa (1987, p. 44) motivates his reaction as follows:

Belinsky believed that art's primary task was to portray the current problems of society, and he understood at once that Poor Folk was the work of a formidable talent. In Dostoevsky's vivid description of the poor and oppressed ... the critic found Russian literature's 'first attempt at a social novel'. ... At last he had discovered a fine example of a literature critical of society. In his battle against the false and unreal Romanticism of the era, Belinsky had long awaited such a work.

By the time the first edition of Poor Folk saw the light, Dostoevsky was already busy on his second short novel, The Double. Like Makar Devushkin, its protagonist, Golyadkin,

is a "little man" in society, but his illusions of grandeur cause him to imagine himself as a hero. This conflict between his everyday life - a struggle to gain acceptance in society - and his imagination eventually reduces him to a state of insanity. Although, like in Poor Folk, Dostoevsky portrays a man condemned to occupy a low place in an unjust society, he introduces elements of the fantastic in the scene in which Golyadkin meets his double. This deviation from the confines of the Natural style incurred the wrath of Belinsky and his followers.

Dostoevsky's second work was roundly condemned by the critics and the public alike - a heavy blow to a young writer who had imagined himself to be on the verge of embarking on a great literary career. His shortstories "The Landlady" and "Mr Prokharchin" were equally unsuccessful. This caused Dostoevsky to break off all relations with Belinsky in 1847. In fact, their political ideologies were worlds apart. Dostoevsky was interested in the spiritual life of his characters. In the words of Grossman (1962, p. 77-78) he "held dear the moral ideal of a community to come, with its poetry of love and cult of justice". Belinsky, on the other hand, was one of the forefathers of communism, who wanted to see the injustices of the Russian social and political system spelled out in Dostoevsky's portraits of members of the oppressed class.

Dostoevsky produced one more novel before his untimely arrest and exile to Siberia. Netochka Nezvanova is a study of two girls of contrasting character, both products of their respective social environments. Netochka is meek and submissive - the result of her poor background which has taught her to accept life as it is. Katya, the spoilt daughter of Prince X, is a typical example of a proud, self-confident young girl of the upper class. The contrast between the "meek" and the "proud" was one which Dostoevsky planned to develop further, when his life was irrevocably changed in April 1849.

During Dostoevsky's early period of literary activity, he therefore did not concentrate on the intelligentsia as a topic for his work. His characters rather tend to be poorly educated and socially oppressed, lacking the arrogance and self-imposed idleness of his later portrayals of members of the intelligentsia.

3 Dostoevsky the revolutionary

In the 1840s, Dostoevsky gradually became aware of the social problems prevalent in Russia, especially the rigid division of society into classes, and the vast disparity between the rich and the poor. Although he first came into contact with the advocates of Utopian Socialism at this time, he never abandoned his Christian beliefs. Like the Utopian Socialists he wanted to eliminate suffering and injustice in Russian society, but unlike them, he had no desire to bring about political upheaval to achieve this aim. He became increasingly aware that his sympathies did not lie with the nobility, but with the bourgeoisie and the urban working class. He voiced his opposition to serfdom and oppression, but at the core of his work was still the human being himself, and not a representative of a social class. In fact, Dostoevsky never agreed to write purely for the socialist cause, arguing that "art was an end in itself and that the tendency to put art in the service of politics constrained the writer's freedom and weakened artistic quality" (Geir, 1987, p. 61).

The social "circles" which began to form in St. Petersburg in the 1840s attracted many of the foremost figures of the time, and Dostoevsky was no exception. The circle he came to frequent in 1847 had been formed a year previously by Mikhail Butashevich-Petrashkevsky, a translator by profession. Petrashkevsky was a firm believer in the ideas

set forth by the French socialist Charles Fourier, who wanted to eliminate poverty and injustice in society by advocating a rebelling of the proletariat against the capitalist system. Dostoevsky first became familiar with Fourier's concept through Petrashevsky, and openly admired him.

Petrashevsky had the courage to set up the first political "circle" in St. Petersburg and even managed to publish some of his theories and ideas under the very nose of the authorities. Once Dostoevsky began to attend his Friday night gatherings, the usually shy author began to make speeches on Utopian socialism, poverty, power, oppression and democracy before the other members of the circle, who came to regard Dostoevsky as somewhat of a propagandist.

Grossman (1974, p. 106) writes that "the principal subjects discussed were serfdom and reformation of the courts and of the press. Talks were given on Utopian socialism, atheism, the struggle against censorship, public trial, and the family and marriage." Although Dostoevsky never came to share Petrashevsky's atheism, he did agree with him that the intelligentsia had a duty to educate and inform the people. Most of the members of the Petrashevsky circle were also avid Westernizers, who saw the wave of socialism sweeping Western Europe as an ideal model for the Russian people.

This conflict between the so-called "Westernizers" and the "Slavophiles" dominated the conversations of the day. The "Westernizers" were those members of the educated classes who (often unconditionally) admired the mores and values of Western Europe, even going to the extent of preferring French to their native language in their conversations. Along with the love of a Western life-style, they also favoured the more democratic Western political systems, and were therefore in direct conflict with the autocratic Russian regime. By 1860, however, the Westernizers had split into two groups, once again accentuating class differentiation in Russia. In his Introduction to Russian Realism, Ernest J. Simmons describes this parting of ways as follows (1965, p. 95):

... the "raznochintsy", that is, men from various strata of society - poor struggling students, sons of priests, traders, petty officials, and peasants - who had obtained status with higher education and membership in the intelligentsia, tended to oppose the landed gentry among the Westernizers. In actuality, the basic social and political struggle of the time was between these aggressive, intellectual commoners, the so-called radical democrats, who demanded the abolition of serfdom and progressive changes in the whole feudal agrarian structure, and the conscience-stricken liberals belonging to the landed gentry who sought these same goals but hoped to achieve them without causing any conflict within their own class or with the bureaucracy or autocracy.

The "Slavophiles", on the other hand, tended to be the older, more politically conservative members of the educated classes. Often they were land-owners, who traditionally supported the tsar and depended on him for

their favoured station in life. To them, the idea of allowing the masses - especially the uneducated peasants - to have an equal say in the affairs of State seemed completely absurd. Whereas in the 1840s the term "Slavophile" had denoted those who merely defended the value of Russian cultural life against Western influences, by 1860 it was used to describe the futile attempt of the aristocracy to maintain its position.

At this time Dostoevsky squarely counted himself among the "Westernizers", welcoming the changes which were taking place in Western Europe and regarding them as the beginning of a "great renewal" in Russia.

As the Friday night discussions at Petrashevsky's gradually became more radical, they also changed from general and theoretical discussions about poverty and injustice in the world to more direct social problems afflicting Russia, such as serfdom, the Russian judicial system, and class differences.

The wave of political upheaval which swept Europe in 1848 had its repercussions in Russia, too. Among the nobility and especially in the tsar's Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, it caused fear and panic, which soon manifested itself in renewed efforts at censorship. Among the peasants the result was a spate of small-scale rebellions. As far as the intellectuals were concerned,

they were split into two camps - those who thought that a peasant revolution was imminent, and those who believed that liberation should come in the form of a tsarist edict to emancipate the serfs by legal means. Dostoevsky belonged to the latter group.

In the meantime, Dostoevsky had started to attend the Petrashevsky gatherings on a regular basis. Because the Petrashevsky circle had grown so rapidly, the chances that it would be detected by the authorities were also increasing. This gave rise to several smaller circles formed by members of the Petrashevsky group, which tended to be more radical. One of these was started by an author by the name of Durov. Although this circle was initially devoted to music and literature, political discussions soon replaced concerts and readings. Dostoevsky began to attend the meetings of this circle late in 1948.

Whereas Petrashevsky's radicalism had consisted mostly of what Daniel R. Brower (1975, p. 28) calls "utopian dreams and bitter complaints against contemporary injustices", the Durov circle was joined by radicals who "gave the group a strongly rebellious colour and aimed it unequivocally towards struggle and protest" (1974, p. 121). One of these was the revolutionary conspirator Nikolai Speshnev, who was to have a distinct influence on Dostoevsky's views, persuading him to help set up a printing press to turn out propaganda literature. This action turned the author from a theoretical speaker into

a "political conspirator" (1974, p. 121).

By April 1849 Durov dissolved the circle, which he feared was in danger of arrest. On 15 April, a meeting took place at Petrashevsky's home, however, at which Dostoevsky read a banned article by the deceased critic Belinsky, entitled "Letter to Gogol". On 22 April, 34 members of the Petrashevsky circle were arrested, among them Fyodor Dostoevsky. When his belongings were searched after his arrest, a work by the French socialist and Fourierist Eugène Sue was found in his possession. This and his open admiration of the "Letter to Gogol" placed him, according to J. Andrew (1982, p. 68) "on the far left of contemporary Russian society in his affiliations".

This attitude was also reflected in his own literary work of that time. He was then working on Netochka Nezvanova, in which he contrasted the lives of two girls from opposite social backgrounds, showing how the poor and oppressed members of Russian society had been rendered humble and docile by the autocratic system, which resulted in a strict social hierarchy.

4 Exile

During his trial on charges of political conspiracy, Dostoevsky described literature as "a mirror of society". He refused to renounce his liberal convictions, even though he was sentenced to death for his role in the Petrashevsky circle. This sentence was commuted to exile in Siberia, from where the author only returned a decade later. In the space of these ten years, a profound change took place in Dostoevsky's views, which was to affect all his later writings and, indeed, his entire outlook on life.

During the years of exile, Dostoevsky once again embraced Christianity, after actively suppressing his religious feelings during his years as a "liberal". This process of rediscovering religion probably already began while he was imprisoned in the Peter-Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, awaiting trial.

Another discovery Dostoevsky made during his years in a Siberian prison camp, was that the convicts, who mainly hailed from the peasant class, displayed a profound hatred of the gentry. Little by little, he reached the conclusion that this century-old animosity was justified, and that there was an immense and unbridgeable gap between the masses and the educated elite, caused by differences in their upbringing and education.

The result of this discovery was that Dostoevsky developed guilt feelings because of his origin as a member of the nobility. He was forced to re-examine his value system, and came to believe that the peasants were more "noble", partially because they had been wronged, and partially because they adhered more closely to the Christian values he espoused than the cynical members of the aristocracy. The insight he gained in this regard led to his introduction of the theme of class hostility in his later works.

When Dostoevsky finally returned to St. Petersburg in December 1859, he was a changed man. Not only had he married during his years in exile and become a "family man"; his political views, too, had undergone the metamorphosis from radical socialism to conservative upholder of Christian ideals. In his Notes from the House of the Dead, published in 1861-62, he set forth his view that the peasants would be amazed and confounded at the radical views of the elite. In the words of Joseph Frank (1986, p. 230), the book serves as "a warning against the delusions of the radical intelligentsia that they could lead a peasant revolution".

From this time onwards, Dostoevsky developed his reflections on the revolutionary spirit among the intelligentsia, its source and its effect on Russian

society. All his later works criticise the radical intelligentsia for their utopian ideals, which bore little relation to real life, and for their willingness to sacrifice the peace and potential prosperity of Russia for the highly improbable attainment of rather unspecific democratic ideals. Whereas at first he regarded members of the radical intelligentsia merely as misguided individuals who erred in their judgement (for example Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment), he later came to see in them the potential for real evil (the revolutionaries in The Possessed).

Part III - Dostoevsky and the society of his time

1 Dostoevsky's views on the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie

When Dostoevsky returned from exile late in 1859, he was just in time to experience the financial crisis which dominated the 1860s. The economy was growing very slowly and had not kept pace with population growth for some time. The gap between the incomes of the nobility and the rest of the population was increasing rather than diminishing, and this was the cause of dissent, particularly on the part of the bourgeoisie.

Dostoevsky found that numerous journals had sprung up during his absence, partially replacing the "circles" of the 1840s and giving voice to the intellectual debate between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. In 1958, Dostoevsky's brother Mikhail had obtained permission to publish a literary and political weekly journal, which he wanted to call "Vremya" (Time). Mikhail was to handle the business side of the journal, while Dostoevsky was to act as editor and chief contributor. Grossman (1974, p. 223) defines the ideology of the new journal as "the reconciliation of civilization with its peasant roots, the synthesis of Russia's cultured stratum with the latent strength of the common people".

The articles which Dostoevsky wrote for "Vremya" and its successor "Epokha" between 1861 and 1865 show that he was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the radical intelligentsia. In fact, from this time onwards Dostoevsky moved steadily, if slowly, in the direction of Slavophilism. The journal still retained its liberal and progressive tone, though without in the least supporting armed rebellion or a political revolution. This meant that the journal was ridiculed by the radicals while still not finding favour with the authorities. In particular, it spoke out against the uncritical adoration of everything Western - and especially French - by the Russian elite.

Dostoevsky also took it upon himself to ridicule the pseudo-liberal attitude prevalent especially among the younger members of the aristocracy at the time. In The Insulted and Injured, Prince Valkovsky represents the arrogant aristocracy of the older generation, ignoring questions put to him, and instead interrupting the speaker with a question of his own. His son Alyosha, on the other hand, is the typical spoilt, rich and entirely ignorant and flippant aristocratic liberal of the time (Dostoevsky, s.a., IV, p. 32):

All Alyosha's impulses and decisions were the fruit of an excessive, nervous impressionability, a warm heart, and an irresponsibility which at times almost approached inanity, an extreme susceptibility to every kind of external influence and a complete absence of will.

Even his mistress Natasha recognises his flightiness

(Dostoevsky, s.a. IV, p. 55):

The first impression, the influence of the first person he meets can turn him away from what he has been swearing allegiance to a minute before. He has no strength of character. He'll vow to be true to you, and that very day he will just as truthfully, just as sincerely, devote himself to someone else; and what's more, he'll come and tell you about it himself.

Alyosha wants to be what he calls "a member of the Third Estate" or "raznochintsy", denying his aristocratic background. He relates an argument he had with his father to Natasha and the narrator (Dostoevsky, s.a. IV, p. 121):

To begin with I said that to marry for money was shameful and ignoble, and that for us to consider ourselves aristocrats was simply stupid. ... Then I explained to him ... that I am proud of being just like everybody else, and that I don't want to be different from anybody ...

When Alyosha meets his prospective bride, Katya, he is immediately attracted to her, because she is as spoilt, naive and well-meaning as he is (Dostoevsky, s.a., IV, p. 137): "[Katya] wants to be of service to her country and all, and to give her mite to the common cause. We used to read of that mite in our school-books, but when that mite smacks of a million it's quite a different matter!"

Alyosha and Katya never realise that they are merely being used by the socialist-orientated members of the intelligentsia, who see in them a potential source of funds (Dostoevsky, s.a., IV, p. 236): "We became the

closest of friends that very evening. There were about twelve people there: students, officers, artists; there was one writer."

In the same naive vein, Varvara Petrovna in The Possessed has literary aspirations (Dostoevsky, 1931, pp. 15, 17):

... Varvara Petrovna threw herself heart and soul into the 'new ideas', and began giving evening receptions. She invited literary people, and they were brought to her at once in multitudes. ... When Varvara Petrovna announced her idea of founding a magazine, people flocked to her in even larger numbers, but charges of being a capitalist and an exploiter of labour were showered upon her to her face.

The writer Karmazinov in the same novel (who, according to various critics, was intended to be a caricature of Turgenev) attempts to ingratiate himself with the radical intelligentsia (Dostoevsky, 1952, p. 195):

In inviting a nihilist to see him, Mr. Karmazinov, no doubt, had in view his relations with the progressives of the younger generation in both capitals. The great author trembled nervously before the revolutionary youth of Russia, and imagining, in his ignorance, that the future lay in their hands, fawned upon them in a despicable way, chiefly because they paid no attention to him whatever.

It is therefore clear that in the ten years between the publication of The Insulted and Injured (1861) and The Possessed (1871), some changes had taken place in Dostoevsky's attitude towards the aristocratic members of the intelligentsia. Whereas he regards Alyosha and Katya merely as typically flighty and foolish young members of

the aristocracy and mocks their ignorance, the somewhat older Varvara Petrovna and Karmazinov are not let off quite so lightly. Varvara Petrovna's lack of direction in life is ultimately punished with the suicide of her son, who also lacks a sense of purpose, while Karmazinov, who represents the liberal writers of the time, is portrayed as a despicable opportunist, who is prepared to abandon Russia once the "real revolution" begins.

The Russian bourgeoisie or middle class developed much later than its counterpart in Western Europe. Known in Russia as the "meshchantstvo", it started to grow in the 1840s as a combination of impoverished members of the lower gentry who had accepted positions in the civil service in Moscow and St. Petersburg, artisans, minor officials, and those members of the lower classes who had managed to obtain a university education. This class also provided the young people who, in the words of A.C. Wilson (1985, p. 8), were "dedicated either to overthrowing the system or at least pursuing a life of political 'crime' within it".

To the bourgeoisie, which had been educated in a European way, it seemed increasingly unjust that, as a class, it should be deprived of a voice in the government of the country, and it wished to replace the monarchy with a democratic constitution implemented by representatives elected by the general populace. This "upsurge of

democratic thinking", as Simmons (1965, p. 94) calls it, constituted a background to the reforms introduced by Alexander II after the death of Nicholas I in 1855: censorship was reduced, newspapers and journals were established, women were admitted to universities and, most importantly, serfdom was abolished.

Dostoevsky, however, saw the growth of democratic ideals among the bourgeoisie as a threat to the stability of the Russian state. He emphasised that, since the time of Peter the Great, all progress in Russia had been initiated by the tsars. But towards the end of his life he grew increasingly disillusioned with both the liberal bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, stating:

The forces of democracy have always, everywhere, been for the people. But in our country the intellectuals have thrown in their lot with the aristocracy and have gone against the people. They go out to the people 'in order to do them good' but they have contempt for the people's customs, for their entire ideological foundation. And contempt cannot lead to love!

In his Diary of a Writer he wrote in March 1877 (in De Jonge, 1975, p. 113):

Each for himself and himself alone, any contact with his fellows is for selfish ends - that is most people's moral principle these days. N.B. it is the basic idea of the bourgeoisie, which replaced the former order at the end of the last century, and has become the main idea of the age throughout the European world.

This provided the foundation for Dostoevsky's admiration of the simple peasant in the last years of his life. Disappointed by both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie as leaders of society, he now defended the view that the god-fearing peasant, who lived a "natural" life close to the soil, had internalised the wisdom required to save Russia from ruin.

2 - Dostoevsky's perception of student life

The concept of social mobility through education arose at the beginning of the 19th century, when it became possible for members of the lower classes - except serfs - to acquire an education through hard work and dedication. The teacher-training institutes, in particular, drew their student body from the bourgeoisie and even from among the ranks of the free peasants. However, the parents of these young men found it difficult to prepare them for intellectual studies and to finance their higher education. There was also a certain degree of hostility towards these students by members of the aristocracy, because they seemed to challenge the social order.

Nicholas Hans (1963, p. 28-29) writes that "Moscow university occupied a central place in Russian intellectual life for many years. During the reign of Nicholas I it developed into a focus for enlightenment for all classes of the Russian people." Alexander Herzen had an even more enthusiastic view (Hans, 1963, p. 29):

From all sides the young forces of Russia flowed into the University as into a common reservoir; in its halls they shed the prejudices acquired in their homes, were levelled down, became brothers, and after graduation were dispersed to all parts of Russia, into all social classes.

Thus the democratic microcosm of the university was in no way a reflection of the autocratic system outside. The political events which took place in Western Europe in 1848 frightened Tsar Nicholas I and made him abandon all thoughts of modernisation. His way of coping with the problem of "free thinking" at Russian universities was to curb State study grants and to raise tuition fees in the mistaken belief that the poorer students were responsible for the vague murmur of social dissent among the educated elite. These repressive measures resulted in a great deal of economic hardship among students.

In an investigation into the life of St. Petersburg students (in Krag, 1962, p. 164), V.T. Sushko writes that a student who gave lessons could expect to earn between 45 and 47 copecks per hour. The cost of renting a room was between 12 and 15 rubles per month, which constituted approximately half of an average student's budget.

Dostoevsky found two subjects of interest in this social problem. The first was the problem of poverty with which he was well acquainted. As Joe Andrew (1982, p. 46) put it:

The wider implications of Dostoevsky's class origins are also important. Firstly, the material conditions of his background, and its later effects, allowed him (as it did Belinsky) to understand the wider problem of poverty much more directly than most writers.

The second was the problem of an educated elite out of touch with the realities of life. He masterfully combined these two topics in Crime and Punishment.

Dostoevsky had already treated the problem of poverty and the way it robs people of their self-respect in his early work. Poverty had been the central theme of Poor Folk. As Geir Kjetsaa (1987, p. 46) summed up Dostoevsky's view: "Without self-respect a man cannot be truly human; without it, his life goes to pieces."

Fanger (1965, p. 207) interprets Dostoevsky's message from a slightly different angle: "Poverty is thus considered as the destruction of the right of individuality, as the suppression of its potentialities."

The protagonist of Crime and Punishment, Rodion Raskolnikov, is a former law student who has had to leave the university because he can no longer afford the tuition fees. He feels guilty about accepting money from his mother and sister, whom he should be supporting. Instead of finding work like his fellow student Razumikhin, however, he isolates himself from society and gives free rein to his dark thoughts.

Joe Andrew (1982, p. 47-48) explains Raskolnikov's problem as follows:

Many of Dostoevsky's heroes, and in particular the Underground Man and Raskolnikov, struggle against grinding poverty and fight bitterly against the resulting humiliation. They struggle to preserve their honour and essential human dignity and are constantly suspicious and hypersensitive, preferring solitude to the rejection that unceasingly awaits them in society.

It may also be said, however, that Raskolnikov subconsciously gets some perverted pleasure from his self-pity. Despite their economic deprivation, Russian students were still among the more fortunate in Russian society because - contrary to most poor people at the time - they had the expectation of a more prosperous life later. In his book Training the Nihilists (1975) Daniel Brower mentions that many students earned extra money from tutoring, as indeed does Razumikhin in Crime and Punishment. Although Razumikhin offers to share his work with Raskolnikov, the latter disdainfully rejects the opportunity. In fact, Raskolnikov uses his poverty as an excuse for committing a crime. He dreams of having the power of a Napoleon by convincing himself that some people (including himself, of course) are destined for greatness and are not bound by the laws of God or society. He tells himself that he is justified in removing from society a money-grabbing old pawnbroker whose money will help him regain his self-respect, and that he is actually doing the world a favour. After the crime, however, it becomes apparent that Raskolnikov has little concern for money: he buries the pawnbroker's purse without even checking its

contents.

Raskolnikov's strangely elitist notions may be better understood when examining the kind of thinking prevalent at Russian universities in the 1860s.

When Alexander II succeeded to the throne in 1855, he liberalised the educational system, expanded facilities for primary and secondary education and granted a measure of autonomy to universities. The early 1860s, however, saw the emergence of a "student movement" at Russian universities. When new tuition fees were announced in May 1861, students organised a protest march through the streets of St. Petersburg. Joseph Frank (1986, p. 139) writes that "the sympathies of most of the intelligentsia, including Fyodor and Mikhail Dostoevsky, were on the side of the students against the authorities." The march resulted in the arrest of 300 students, the suspension of 659, and the closure of the university for two years (McClelland, 1979, p. 95).

The events of 1861 signalled the beginning of a permanent state of war between the regime and the student population which was to last until the time of the Russian revolution. The students were avid readers of both the writings of Western European socialists and of the radical literary periodicals of St. Petersburg and Moscow. In fact, Raskolnikov's illusions of Napoleonic grandeur were

based on a highly controversial biography of Napoleon which had been published in France some years before, and had recently been translated. Scientific thinking replaced traditional religion and materialism gained a foothold among the intelligentsia. The concept of the "rational egotist" emerged at this time. Raskolnikov, too, attempts to overcome his problems by reasoning that he could stand above common morality by virtue of his supposed "greatness".

The views of the students were quite often supported by their professors. The academic intelligentsia was inclined to favour a more liberal political system and broader intellectual values in Russia. Most of them, however, rejected the radicalism which was rapidly spreading among the student body.

Brower (1975, p. 108) maintains that "by the 1860s the schools had inexplicably become the chief recruiting area for the radical movement. ... What had involved small groups in the 1840s had become a mass movement by the middle of the 1870s".

Contrary to the belief of the autocratic regime that the radical intellectuals came from the lower ranks of Russian society, it appears that many of them were of noble birth and owed their education to the privileges of their class. The only common factor seemed to be the value they placed

on education. Brower (1975, p. 107) states that "they were typical of the educated class in Russia in every respect except their refusal to accept the system that had nurtured them".

The radical students and Raskolnikov foremost among them, believed that knowledge was power. Brower writes on this point (1975, p. 87): "The universities were a dangerous cultural innovation precisely because their Western heritage stressed secular learning and the search for empirical truth."

The next logical step was, of course, to translate theoretical knowledge into action. Leaflets began to appear all over St. Petersburg and Moscow. Most of the young people arrested for political crimes in the 1870s were younger than twenty-five years of age. The activists among the student population created what T.C. McClelland (1979, p. 95) calls "a cult of self-sacrifice". It was this desire to be of service to humanity which led to the "populist" movement of the 1870s.

3 Dostoevsky's impression of the lower classes

Upon Dostoevsky's return to St. Petersburg in 1860, the theme of urban poverty once again appeared in his works. The 19th century was a time of rapid urbanisation, both in Russia and in the rest of the developed world. While in Western Europe industrialisation was the main reason for urbanisation, Russian urbanisation was more a result of the abolition of serfdom. The disgruntled former serfs of frequently impoverished landowners came to the cities in droves in an attempt to escape rural poverty.

In an article for the Journal of Social History (1968, p. 336), Daniel Brower describes urban life in Russia as follows:

Industry, however, was still not an important factor in city life; in the 1860s, there were about 750 factories in Moscow, mostly small enterprises with 50-60 workers. The cities, primarily St. Petersburg, were just beginning to make room for the literary professions, with a few critics, novelists and poets struggling to make a living solely off their writing. They quickly acquired a voice in Russian life far out of proportion to their actual numbers.

In the 1840s the young Dostoevsky had been one of these "struggling novelists". His view of urban life was a pessimistic one even then. In Poor Folk, his first work, the city is already portrayed in a negative manner, in the words of Leonid Grossman (1962, p. 45):

... as a city of striking and frightening contrasts, a sick, strange and melancholy city, seeming, to this impressionable observer, to be full of the dramas, trivial in their detail but far from trivial in their despair, that are the basis of his early stories.

What Donald Fanger (1965, p. 159) describes as the "gray moral atmosphere of Petersburg life" becomes even more bleak and depressing in The Double, where the city is seen through "an impressionistic haze" (1965, p. 169), revealing the back streets and seedy districts.

In The Insulted and the Injured, the former estate manager Ikhmenev has brought his family to the city to fight a law-suit (which he loses) against his former employer. This recurring theme of the man who has "come to seek justice in the city of lost illusions, the place in which, almost by definition, justice can not be found" (De Jonge, 1975, p. 63) had already been touched upon in Poor Folk, and was to be repeated in The Adolescent, where Arkady Dolgoruky's father is engaged in a law-suit over an inheritance.

In The Adolescent, the city is again portrayed in a negative way, in the words of Geir Kjetsaa (1987, p. 293) as "a society where the struggle for wealth and power is carried on devoid of controlling principles or great ideas."

Dostoevsky regarded the city as a microcosm, describing it as "this whole world with all its inhabitants, strong and

weak." He wanted to emphasise the chaos and suffering of the city as opposed to the harmony of traditional country life. He regarded the city as the symbol of a rapidly changing world, a new kind of "civilisation" which alienated man from his roots in the form of religion, family life and a close-knit community.

He chose his urban protagonists from among the "declassed gentry, the petty government officials, and the urban intelligentsia, struggling, helpless and without roots, to find their way in the chaos of the indifferent city" (Fanger, 1965, p. 134). He ignored the fashionable avenues and shops to concentrate on the quarters around the Hay Market, where life "is a struggle for mere subsistence in the face of grinding poverty, crime, prostitution and drunkenness" (Andrew, 1982, p. 88).

The culmination of his portrayal of the city as a place of disease and immorality came in what is perhaps his greatest novel, Crime and Punishment. The protagonist, Raskolnikov, is a member of the impoverished intelligentsia. His chaotic world and misguided value system are reflected in the stifling atmosphere of St. Petersburg's back streets.

The social status and financial position of the characters is mirrored by the floor on which they live. Respectable people live no higher up than the third floor, while the fourth floor represents poverty and the fifth floor

symbolises extremely straitened circumstances. Raskolnikov lives as a sub-tenant in a fifth-floor cubicle, where his wretched living conditions and total isolation wreak havoc on the half-baked ideas of Napoleonic power which he harbours. The result, predictably, is disastrous.

The people whom Raskolnikov encounters - among them a drunkard and a prostitute - strengthen his resolve to carry out his wild plan of murdering an old pawn-broker who is, in Raskolnikov's eyes, greedy, useless and parasitic. His aim is to prove that he can stand above the law and common morality because he is an "exceptional man", a "Napoleon". In so doing he hopes to overcome the life of poverty, idleness and depression which is dragging him down.

The anonymous city streets are Raskolnikov's only contact with life, and the twisted, narrow and dark stairways mirror the confusion and darkness of his mind. Capitalism, in turn, is presented as the exploitation of the poor, vividly portrayed in the Marmeladov family, caught up in a world of poverty, alcoholism, prostitution and disease.

Although Raskolnikov is portrayed as an extreme case of a misguided individual and his isolation from society is stressed many times in the novel, he does to a certain extent represent the intelligentsia of the time. His view of himself as a "Napoleon" among men was not an uncommon

one, following the widely read publication of the Russian translation of Napoleon III's History of Caesar at the beginning of 1865. His role in the novel is that of a "warning light" to the intelligentsia. Dostoevsky wanted to point out the increasing isolation of the radical intelligentsia from the rest of Russian society. Like Raskolnikov, who retreats to his garret and loses himself in his half-baked ideas, the radical intelligentsia had spiritually divorced itself from the people, retreating into its utopian idealism.

4 Rebellion against an autocratic system

The rigid system of political censorship which existed in the Russia of Tsar Nicholas I made the expression of personal liberal views well-nigh impossible. The commission which investigated the Petrashevtsy affair in the late 1840s actually came to the conclusion that "the principle of individual rights was incompatible with the political bases of the Russian autocracy" (Brower, 1975, p. 153). Deprived of its political voice, the intelligentsia concentrated on purely abstract questions. The plight of the lower classes was widely ignored.

The accession of Tsar Alexander II to the Russian throne in 1855 and his subsequent social reforms, one of which was the abolition of serfdom, heralded an era of greater tolerance in Russia.

4a The first seeds of democracy

In Western Europe, the early 19th century was a time of decline in the power of the church. Religion lost its importance in everyday life, and the spiritual and political leaders of the time simply ignored its existence. The more moderate among them simply equated religion with morals and ethics, while the more outspoken flatly denied the existence of a God. The influential philosopher Nietzsche categorically stated that "God is dead".

The void left by the decline of religion had to be filled with a new philosophy of reason. This led to the emergence of utopian socialism, a philosophy which advocated atheism, science and a belief in progress and the power of man.

In Russia, however, the growing influence of this socialist world-view caused a split in the ranks of the intelligentsia. The Slavophiles fiercely clung to the Russian orthodox religion and to the traditional values of the Russian gentry. Although it was at first a philosophical trend in its own right, Slavophilism soon disintegrated into rigid political conservatism. The Westerners, though united in their admiration of progressive French and German philosophies, were divided

by class. On the one hand the so-called raznochinttsy consisted of men from the poorer classes - poor students, sons of priests, tradesmen, petty officials and peasants - who had managed to rise in social status because they had been educated. They demanded the abolition of serfdom and various other concessions.

On the other hand, there were the liberal members of the landed gentry whose conscience troubled them. They sought to achieve the same goals as their poorer counterparts, but tried to avoid conflict with other members of their class or the establishment. Unlike in Western Europe, where the new ideals of the time were primarily championed by members of the bourgeoisie, the liberal intelligentsia in Russia mainly consisted of members of the gentry. In his book Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, Martin Malia (1961, p. 421) explains this phenomenon as follows:

In a relatively closed society the most fertile breeding-ground for great democratic theories is in an intermediate area between the serene privilege of the Establishment and the mute servitude of the masses, an area where some measure of dignity and education make possible the self-confidence, the acute sense of moral scandal at social injustice, and the ideological talent to formulate generalized demands. As modern societies grow more diversified and complex, the intermediate area from which such individuals come grows broader and increasingly more democratic. But in Nicholas I's empire, this area was largely coterminous with the gentry, which was why - and not because of any innate merit - the democratic ideal in Russia was born among that class.

Under the reign of Nicholas I, however, "Russian Westernism as an intellectual movement was forced underground" (Ward, 1986, p. 18). By the time Dostoevsky returned from exile in 1860, however, Alexander II had ascended the throne and Russian intellectual life had found a new form of expression - the literary journal. The journal he started together with his brother Mikhail was called Vremya, and proclaimed as its ideological goal "the reconciliation of civilization with its peasant roots, the synthesis of Russia's cultural stratum with the latent strength of the common people" (Grossman, 1962, p. 223).

Dostoevsky's articles during 1862-1863 show what Joseph Frank (1986, p. 207) calls "his growing disenchantment with the radicals and an increasing tilt towards Slavophilism". Dostoevsky's philosophy, however, retained some of its liberal flavour, but without even a hint of violence or rebellion.

As a pessimist, Dostoevsky regarded humans as natural killers, who are kept from killing only by their fear of divine retribution. In Dostoevsky's view, then, a strong and authoritative church was a necessity for keeping man from living out his murderous inclinations.

In The Possessed, "Dostoevsky went so far as to draw a direct line connecting Western education with the desire to kill" (Pipes, 1974, p. 277). Pyotr Verkhovensky is the

son of the liberal Western thinker Stepan Verkhovensky, and has received a Western education. As a man he is ruthless and cold; his machinations are the root of all the evil in the novel. Most of the book was written while Dostoevsky lived abroad, hating Western Europe every moment he was there and longing for home.

In The Brothers Karamazov, too, Dostoevsky portrays Ivan as a Western rationalist, ultimately responsible for his father's death.

In Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky's principal aim was to show that Raskolnikov's theory, an exaggeration of Western rationalism, is unethical and, if generally applied, would not have led to an improvement of the social system. One of Raskolnikov's main miscalculations is his disregard for the human qualities of guilt and fear.

4 b Liberalism among the elite

In Russia, the intellectual life in the "circles" was an important form of social and political expression. A "circle" was any gathering of intellectuals at which a variety of controversial subjects of the day was discussed.

Dostoevsky describes such a circle and its topics of conversation in the opening pages of The Possessed (1931, p. 17):

They talked of the abolition of the censorship, and of phonetic spelling, of the substitution of the Latin characters for the Russian alphabet, of someone's having been sent into exile the day before, of some scandal, of the advantage of splitting Russia into nationalities united in a free federation, of the abolition of the army and the navy, of the restoration of Poland as far as the Dnieper, of the peasant reform, and of the manifestos, of the abolition of the hereditary principle, of the family, of children, and of priests, of women's rights ...

The narrator of The Possessed describes these conversations as "most harmless, agreeable, typically Russian, light-hearted liberal chatter" and the form of liberalism they aspire to as "higher liberalism". According to him, a higher liberal is "a liberal without any definite aim" (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 26).

Another proponent of this vague kind of liberalism is the writer Karmazinov. He tried to curry favour with the younger generation by pretending to aspire to Nihilist ideas, but he has an ulterior motive: he wants to find out when the revolution is due to take place, so that he will have time enough to sell his estate and move to Germany.

4 c The influence of socialism

The 18th century Russian writer Radishchev, author of Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, may well be regarded as the father of Russian socialism. It was not before the 1840s though, that Western socialist ideas began to filter into Russia in earnest. One of the leading proponents of Russian socialism at that time was Alexander Herzen, who regarded the Russian village commune as a rudimentary form of socialism. It was not in the Russian countryside though, but among a small circle of urban intellectuals in St. Petersburg and Moscow, that socialism began to take root.

Malia (1961, p. 4) maintains that Russian socialism was the natural result of the extremes of the political system of the time, with an authoritarian state inadvertently furthering anarchist anti- reaction, and the backwardness of large sectors of the Russian population diametrically opposed to what he calls "the cult of progress" in the larger cities. These extremes led to the evolution of the Russian intelligentsia, which Malia defines thus (1961, p. 4):

In short, the inventors of socialism did not come from any one class that can be defined in economic or social terms, but from what can only be called a moral or intellectual category, for which the Russians were the first to find an appropriate word - the intelligentsia.

At the time of Dostoevsky's return from exile, Russian socialism was dominated by thinkers such as Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, all ardent followers of Marx and Engels. Dostoevsky dismissed the idea of a socialist society as a utopia.

In his Notes from Underground Dostoevsky voiced his first criticism of socialism, a complete reversal of the ideology of his youth. He launched a bitter attack on the revolutionary democrats and proclaimed what Leonid Grossman (1962, p. 311) calls "untrammelled individualism". Grossman goes on to say that "Dostoevsky's hero regarded Utopian socialism, with its promise of universal happiness, as a beautiful lie divorced from reality, from contemporary Petersburg with its dismal streets, wet snow and ruined girls" (1962, p. 311).

He sums up Notes from Underground as "the first of several long novels which expressed his ceaseless search for some principle of a renewal of the old world other than the great social ideas that had illumined his youth" (1962, p. 317).

In his next novel, Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky continues his attack on socialism. In the novel the former student Razumikhin attacks the socialists for their belief that "if society is normally organized, all crime will cease at once, since there will be nothing to protest

against and all men will become righteous in one instant." At the other end of the scale we have the character Lebeziatnikov, a supporter of socialism. Dostoevsky also portrays the "pseudo-socialist" in the figure of Luzhin, a bourgeois materialist, who pretends to agree with the concept of rational egoism. Dostoevsky's protagonist, Raskolnikov, dismisses the socialists as "a diligent, industrious lot, concerned with 'universal happiness' ..."

In The Idiot, Dostoevsky contrasts the character of Nastasya Filippovna, a sensuous and wilful woman who, despite her education, is completely ensconced in the limited world of her own feelings and desires, with that of Aglaya Epanchina. At first glance, Aglaya appears to be a model of progressive socialism. She is intelligent, critical of her environment and ready to be of service to mankind. She proclaims: "I do not want to go to their balls. I want to be useful." At the end of the novel she breaks free from her protected life and joins a Polish revolutionary in his homeland. In view of Dostoevsky's clear anti-Polish sentiments, however, it is doubtful whether he regarded this step as a heroic one on her part; it may rather be interpreted as another dismissal of socialist ideas as misguided and concerned with irrelevant questions.

Dostoevsky had not entirely forgotten the ardent striving for social reform of his younger days, though. The young

Kolya Krasotkin in The Brothers Karamazov is a charming portrayal of a young revolutionary hot-head. He declares "I am a socialist", quotes Belinsky and Voltaire, and disdains the Christian religion. Despite his sympathetic description of this would-be revolutionary, Dostoevsky was a staunch defender of Christianity. In the chapter entitled "The Grand Inquisitor", Ivan Karamazov presents his critique of Christianity. In the end, however, Ivan, in spite of his self-confident atheism, turns out to have less moral strength than his younger brother Alyosha, a devoted Christian intent on becoming a monk.

However, Dostoevsky was unable to separate Christianity from the need for strong authority and, somewhat reluctantly, ended by endorsing the autocratic Russian regime.

The Brothers Karamazov was Dostoevsky's last novel. His last public appearance was in 1881, when he gave a speech in commemoration of the work of the great Russian poet Pushkin. In this speech he advised the intelligentsia to climb off the pedestal on which it had placed itself and to learn by working (in Grossman, 1962, p. 597): "Humble yourself, proud man and above all humble your pride. Humble yourself, idle man, and above all toil in your country's fields."

His speech was a round condemnation of both socialism and

political rebellion, and called for a return to Christianity. His critics were quick to point out, however, that Dostoevsky's views were by now entirely out of touch with the realities of Russian life.

4 d Populism and the emergence of the radical movement

The radical movement which emerged in Russia in the 1860s had its roots in the first timid whispers of dissent first voiced in the 1840s, when Dostoevsky had joined the Petrashevsky circle. In the decades which followed, a specifically Russian brand of revolutionary ideology was created. By the 1860s this had grown into what Brower (1975, p. 19) calls "a real radical community", which was "defined internally by institutional and ideological bonds and externally by a strong sense of social disaffection".

Richard Pipes writes as follows about this radical community (1974, p. 272):

The radicals of the 1860s wished to create a new man. He was to be totally practical, free of religious and philosophical preconceptions, a 'rational egoist', and yet, at the same time, an absolutely dedicated servant of society and fighter for a juster life.

When Dostoevsky and his brother Mikhail published their journals Vremya and Epokha in the early 1860s, they took great care to disassociate themselves both from the Slavophiles, whom they regarded as out of touch with the modern realities of Russian life, and from the radical intelligentsia, who by then saw it as their prime task to improve the lot of the peasantry.

It was at this time that Alexander Herzen's theory of Russian socialism founded on the peasant commune had a

great impact on Russian thought. Herzen wrote (in Malia, 1961, p. 366, 367):

The Russian village does not exist in Europe. The rural commune in Europe has meaning only in terms of the policy. What is there in common between these scattered houses fenced off one from another? For them everything is particular, they are joined only by common boundaries. ... Gentlemen, long live the Russian village! Its future is great.

In a letter to the French historian Michelet, Herzen pointed out that the Russian peasant commune was a form of rudimentary socialism, making the peasants naturally susceptible to socialist ideas from the West.

In 1862, when Dostoevsky worked as editor of the journal Grazhdanin, he launched a vehement attack on Herzen and his theory, writing that the intelligentsia's view of the Russian peasantry was a supremely idealistic one (Linnér, 1967, p. 47): "... they loved the people negatively, conceiving in their stead some ideal people, such as, according to their notions, the Russian people ought to be".

He also attacked the Westernised Russian intelligentsia for regarding themselves as superior to the peasants, and for being sensitive to criticism on this issue of superiority.

In the early 1870s, the Russian socialist thinkers Bakunin and Lavrov began to call on young people to abandon the universities and to go out into the villages to work among

the peasants, bringing them the message that a revolution was imminent. Richard Pipes describes their propaganda thus (1974, p. 273): "[Bakunin] believed that the muzhik was a born anarchist, and only a spark was needed to set the countryside on fire. That spark was to be carried by the intelligentsia in the form of revolutionary 'agitation'."

As a result of this propaganda, hundreds of young men and women migrated to the countryside in 1873-74 to educate and liberate the oppressed masses. Their attempt failed miserably. On the whole, the peasant wanted nothing to do with what Pipes (1974, p. 273) calls "idealistic students come to save him". They either ignored them entirely or reported them to the local police.

The students turned crusaders were also bitterly disappointed by the fact that, instead of scorning the notion of private property, the Russian peasant was highly competitive and materialistic. This caused a split in the radical movement. Some of the young people - known as "narodniki" thought that instead of trying to teach the peasants, the intellectuals should settle in the villages and try to learn from them. Another group decided to wait until capitalism had died a natural death and proceeded to subside into inactivity. The third group, however, turned to terrorism.

Repeated attempts were made on the life of Alexander II, and he was finally assassinated in 1881. Under the strict measures taken by his successor, Alexander III, the populist movement was driven further underground. It only re-emerged in 1902 under Nicholas II, when the Socialist Revolutionary Party, a peasant-orientated movement, was established.

From Dostoevsky's journalistic writings of the 1860s it became clear that he opposed serfdom. However, he was equally opposed to the new-found democratic system which now prevailed in Western Europe. He suggested that a development of the Russian peasant commune would be preferable to importing Western socialism.

Dostoevsky was also profoundly concerned with what he saw as a split between the Russian people and the intelligentsia. He saw the hatred of the lower classes towards the westernised and materialistic upper classes, who no longer had their roots in the Russian soil and culture. To Dostoevsky, this loss of tradition symbolised the loss of a social order, a theme which he developed in The Brothers Karamazov. Here the main characters have widely diverging views about the peasants. Old Karamazov simply regards them as a foolish animal-like lot (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 158):

And as for the ideas he may be hatching, the Russian peasant, generally speaking, needs thrashing. That I've always maintained. Our peasants are swindlers, and don't deserve to be pitied, and it's a good thing they're still flogged sometimes. Russia is rich in birches. If they destroyed the forests, it would be the ruin of Russia. I stand up for the clever people. We've left off thrashing the peasants, we've grown so clever, but they go on thrashing themselves. And a good thing too. ...

Ivan sees them as cannon-fodder for a future revolution (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 157):

"... he's a lackey and a mean soul. Raw material for revolution, however, when the time comes. ... There will be others and better ones. But there will be some like him as well. His kind will come first, and better ones after."

Dmitry, however, is pained by the poverty and suffering of the peasants. He wants to become their protector and defender. His views correspond to those of Dostoevsky on the subject who, although he clearly understood that his background and education prevented him from ever becoming like them, longed for the type of innocence and simple belief in God which he encountered among the peasants. Time and again in this novel Dostoevsky returns to the theme of the peasantry as the object of the hope and concern of the Russian intelligentsia.

This equation of innocence with goodness was not new in Dostoevsky's work. In Crime and Punishment, already, Sonya, though a prostitute by profession, is a religious innocent at heart, representing simplicity and the belief in divine

redemption. In The Idiot it is Prince Myshkin who, by virtue of his mental derangement, becomes an innocent observer among the liberal members of the aristocracy.

In his later years, Dostoevsky was to develop the belief that the Russian peasant was morally superior, both to the intelligentsia and to the peasants of other countries.

4 e Nihilism

The term "Nihilism" was coined by Turgenev who, in his novel Fathers and Children, described the eagerness of young educated Russians to overthrow all traditional values of Russian society, to replace religion with science, and to redefine morality. Pomper describes this trend in his work, The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia (1970, p. 67):

It included, among other things, condescension in conversation and a casual attitude toward dress and appearance, if not downright eccentricity. The effect was usually one of austerity, especially for nihilist girls, whose short hair, drab clothing, spectacles and cigarettes were symptoms of the drive for feminine equality that began in Russia during this period. Nihilists denied not only the traditional roles of women but also the family, private property, religion, art - in a word, all of the traditional aspects of culture and society.

Gradually the trend of Nihilism began to supersede the old Utopian Socialism, with the Nihilists seeking justification for ever more violent means of attaining their goals. The time between 1863 and 1865 was characterised by a public quarrel between these two groups of radicals, which of course did not escape Dostoevsky's notice. In his magazine Epoch he printed a number of articles on this dispute, remarking that this was a milestone in the development of radical ideas. Whereas he regarded the Utopian Socialists as fairly harmless idealists who were merely out of touch with the people and with reality, he perceived a far more

dangerous note in the emergence of Nihilism. As it was basically an atheistic trend, it clashed with his Christian values, and he saw in it the potential destruction of civilisation as a whole.

Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground shows the contrast between the social Romantics of the 1840s and the Nihilists of the 1860s in the two parts of the work, which attempts to reveal the effect of Western thinking on the Russian mind.

Dostoevsky gives his "underground man" Chernyshevsky's philosophy of determinism as a starting point. This philosophy, expounded by the Russian social critic Chernyshevsky in his article on "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", written in 1860, denies that man has any free will to act in the manner he wishes. He maintained that every action or thought was merely the consequence of an act, thought or fact which had preceded it. Dostoevsky mocks this theory by allowing his "underground man" to use it to justify his moral weaknesses.

The "underground man" has not managed to progress in his career or to develop as a person. His shabby lodgings reflect the shabbiness of his mind. This lack of progress is vividly highlighted by his meeting with his former schoolfellows, who shame him by not inviting him to their

dinner. He arrives nevertheless, anticipating further humiliation, but telling himself that by choosing to be humiliated, he is superior to those who humiliate him. The same sentiment induces him to provoke a collision with an officer in the street.

One of the by-products of Nihilism was the trend of Social Darwinism, which Dostoevsky aptly portrayed in Crime and Punishment. Social Darwinism maintained that, ultimately, all men were not equal, and that the strong, by virtue of their power, had the right to subjugate and oppress the weak. In Crime and Punishment this type of thinking is reflected in Raskolnikov's theory that the "Napoleons" of this world have the right to transcend the morality of the common people if they consider this to be for the greater good of humanity, thus leading to what Yarmolinsky (1971, p. 217) calls a "justification of evil means by noble ends". This elevation of the human intellect to god-like status was, in Dostoevsky's eyes, the primary sin of the Nihilists.

Dostoevsky's associate, Nikolai Strakhov, pointed out that Crime and Punishment was the first novel about an unhappy nihilist, one who is able to suffer in a human fashion: "His aim was to show how life and theory struggle within a human soul, to depict that conflict in a situation in which it has reached its highest pitch, and to demonstrate that in the end life wins out" (Grossman, 1962, p. 355).

Dostoevsky also conducts the reader through the gradual demise of Raskolnikov's theory, as he ultimately has to face the choice between what Frank calls "non-Utilitarian Christian love and self-sacrifice in Sonia or total amorality leading to self-destruction in Svidrigailov" (in Jackson, 1974, p. 90).

Frank also points out that in most of his major works, Dostoevsky chose to portray the inner struggle of a member of the Russian intelligentsia who finds it difficult to choose between his "innate feelings and his conscious ideas, between the irrational and the amorality of reason in one form or another" (in Jackson, 1974, p. 87).

The Nihilist argument that violence was justified as a tactic for bringing about a national revolution if this revolution would serve to promote a more just society in the long term, was based on the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin, a follower of the German philosopher Hegel. It was this philosophy which Dostoevsky portrayed in his 1871 novel, The Possessed. The central figure of the novel, Nikolay Stavrogin, is based on the personality of Bakunin (Grossman, 1962, p. 473).

Leonid Grossman (1962, p. 473) writes that Dostoevsky "wanted to embody in Stavrogin his own picture of the celebrated Russian rebel and to show that all his noisy activities were as fruitless and futile as was his

much-discussed personality". Stavrogin is portrayed as typical of his class - a nobleman who, by extensively travelling in Europe, has become a stranger to Russia. He is quite powerless to carry out his vague ideas of social reform and, rather than settle for what he considers to be second-best, he chooses a life of inactivity. This, in turn, leads to depression and a sense of futility, and ultimately to suicide.

Stavrogin is essentially a man of ideas, and not of action. His ideas, however, have become so abstract and removed from reality that he has "lost the capacity for identifying or acting upon his emotions" (Howe in Miller, 1986, p. 139). He has also lost the ability to experience human emotions like fear, excitement or sensuality. His life has become entirely empty.

Other characters in the novel are also based on prominent Nihilists of the time. Pyotr Verkhovensky is modelled on Sergei Nechaev, a Nihilist influenced by Bakunin's radical circle in Geneva, who murdered a member of his own small revolutionary group because he dared to doubt Nechaev's claim that he was the head of a nationwide network of conspirators. Irving Howe (in Miller, 1986, p. 143) remarks that "under Verkhovensky's grotesque guidance, politics becomes a catalyst speeding the moral break-up of Russia". He also quotes Dostoevsky, who at one point referred to the phenomenon of moral decline in Russia by saying that

"every Russian is inordinately delighted at any public scandal and disorder".

One of Dostoevsky's most poisonous barbs is directed at the liberal Russian author Turgenev, who was regarded by the more conservative writers of his time as a Nihilist and Westerner who had become an enemy of Russia. In the novel he becomes the so-called "great writer" Karmazinov, who turns out to be far more concerned about selling his estate before the "revolution" and moving to Germany than about the political questions of the time which he claims dominate his life.

Dostoevsky's attitude to Nihilism underwent a clear transformation between the writing of Notes from Underground and The Possessed. The hero of Notes from Underground may be immature and insensitive (as is shown in his dealings with the prostitute Liza), but he is certainly no embodiment of evil. During the years which followed, however, he came to regard Nihilism as a malignant force. By the time he wrote The Possessed in 1871, he had come to regard it as plainly demonic: a force to be exorcised.

4 f The radical intelligentsia after 1860

In the 1830s, Russian Westernism had been influenced by the rather "gentle" liberalism of the German philosopher Schelling, on whose works Belinsky, the leading Russian social critic of the time, based his thinking. Gradually, however, the ideas of Schelling were being replaced by the far more radical and violent philosophies of another German philosopher, Hegel, which in Dostoevsky's opinion had a demoralising influence on the Russian intelligentsia. Indeed it appeared that the Russian intellectuals were prepared to take Western ideas to far greater extremes than the Westerners themselves.

The liberal intellectuals who gathered in the Election Palace in Geneva in 1867 called themselves the "League for Peace and Freedom". This League was a pacifist group concerned mainly with the escalating tension between France and Prussia, but the congress quickly turned into a general conference on the evil of large and powerful states. Dostoevsky attended this congress and was struck by the League's total alienation from real life on the one hand, and by its radical calls for the abolition of Christianity and the forcible imposition of peace on the other.

By then Dostoevsky's view of Westernist thinking had become far removed from that of his youth. He had lost his faith in the intelligentsia as the primary vehicle for change in

Russia, and had come to believe in the power of the common people to change the future of the country. His struggle to reconcile his former love of Western culture with his newly-discovered love for the Russian people had already become apparent in the articles he wrote from abroad for the Russian journal "Vremya" in 1863. In these he criticised the capitalism which had become apparent in the great cities of Europe, with its attendant oppression of the weak by their more wolfish counterparts. The following year he went even further, when he turned his back on the progressive forces in Russia, mocking them in his Notes from Underground. Apart from ridiculing Utopian socialism, Westernism and atheism, he also rails against the trend of materialism and the susceptibility of the Russian intelligentsia to the products of the pen of every Western literary hack.

The philosophy of materialism had had a profound influence on the young Russian radicals of the late 1850s and early 1860s, which Pomper (1970, p. 72) describes thus:

They believed that acceptance of materialism brought with it power over matter - over human ethical problems as well as over nature external to man. Nature and society were to be workshops in which enlightened men could exercise their reason and will.

This influence of what Dostoevsky regarded as a product of evil Europe was, in his view, the result of the Russian intelligentsia's ludicrous respect for Western literature.

His "underground man" gives expression to this idea when he says (Frank in Miller, 1986, p. 62):

Leave us alone without any books, and we shall at once get confused, lose ourselves in a maze, we shall not know what to cling to, what to hold on to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise.

Another difference between the radical intelligentsia of the 1860s and that of the 1840s was its social composition. Whereas in the 1840s, these educated members of society had come mainly from the ranks of the nobility, the new generation tended to come from the ambitious and upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. Daniel Brower writes that "statistics suggest that social advancement was an important factor in the background of these radical intelligentsia" (1968, p. 350). He goes on to suggest that their radicalism may well have been due to a deep-rooted feeling of social insecurity.

One rather unusual aspect of the radical intelligentsia was its fairly large contingent of young men and women of Jewish origin. In Russia the Jews had been traditionally isolated from non-Jews by their religion and way of life. Most of them were small tradesmen and artisans who lived in dire poverty in small towns all over Russia. This increased the general feeling of anti-Semitism among the Russian population, which blamed the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 on the Jews, setting off the first of

many anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia.

According to Brower (1968, p. 337), the radicals:

... differed widely among themselves in their program for change and in their attitude toward the institutions of Russian society (family, class, Church, state). But the rejection of prevailing values and the commitment to Western-inspired ideologies marked these intellectuals as a special group, sufficiently distinct to be described as a 'subculture'.

One idea supported by many of these young intellectuals was that art and science should be placed at the disposal of the political struggle, a view which Dostoevsky, as a member of an older generation, rejected outright. At the same time, scientific knowledge came to be regarded as the solution to all human problems. Among the radicals, this tendency developed into the trend of "scientific socialism".

During his years in a Siberian labour camp, Dostoevsky had come to understand how completely the Russian intelligentsia was isolated from the Russian people. This discovery, which came as somewhat of a shock to him, led him to regard, in the words of Joseph Frank (in Jackson, 1974, p. 82), "all moral and ethical issues in the light of the inner psychological problems posed for the Russian intelligentsia by the necessity of assimilating (and living by) alien Western European ideas".

The change in radical thinking in the 1860s which led to the support of violence and destruction among some members of the intelligentsia, is reflected in the appearance of a proclamation entitled "Young Russia" in May 1862. It was the work of a young Moscow student, P. Zaichnevsky, who summed up the views of an entire sub-section of Russian society, when he wrote the following (Dryzhakova, 1979, p 63):

There is only one way out of this oppressive, terrifying situation - revolution, bloody and merciless, a revolution which must radically change all - without exception, all - the bases of present-day society and destroy the upholders of the existing order.

It was this kind of thinking which Dostoevsky portrayed four years later in Crime and Punishment. His protagonist, Raskolnikov, is a student from a bourgeois background. He commits murder while reasoning that the harm done by his crime would be out-weighed by the good it would allow him to accomplish. By rationalising his crime in this manner, he hopes to remain in control of the situation. The novel was vehemently criticised by leading members of the intelligentsia, who according to Kjetsaa (1987, p. 183):

... did everything in their power to deny both that Raskolnikov's ideas were widespread in Russian and that he was in any way a typical representative of students at the time. The reviews indicate that they clearly believed that Dostoevsky had libeled the younger generation.

Raskolnikov's intelligence and serious nature are contrasted with the vulgarity and stupidity of Lebezyatnikov, who distorts radical ideas in a ridiculous manner, thus rendering them harmless. His purpose in the novel is, however, to show how such seemingly harmless views can lead to crime and evil when held by men of action such as Raskolnikov.

Dostoevsky continued his attack on the radical intelligentsia in The Possessed, which Grossman (1962, p. 479) describes as a "political satire against the revolutionary movement". It is particularly the character Shigalov, who, in the words of Irving Howe (in Miller, 1986, p. 144), "personifies those traits of dogmatism to be found among the Russian radicals, indeed, among most Russian intellectuals, who were forced by their intolerable position to drive all opinions to extremes".

By the time Dostoevsky came to write The Brothers Karamazov, he had mellowed somewhat in his condemnation of the radicals, and came to see them rather as misguided holders of humanitarian ideals. He refuted the radicals' view that man was naturally a gentle, benevolent and sensible being by juxtaposing it with his portrayal of Ivan and Dmitry Karamazov and the divinity student Rakitin.

Disillusioned with the radical intelligentsia, Dostoevsky

turned to the peasant to live up to his ideals. During the last years of his life he clung to this belief that the peasant was a symbol of all the traditional goodness of Russian society. He chose to ignore the fact that even among the peasants, many of the evils of society could be found. He preferred to see them as content with their station in life, and as the embodiment of Christian virtue.

5 Dostoevsky's intelligentsia - its flaws and weaknesses

All of Dostoevsky's post-exile work shared one common train of thought - to show the imperfections behind the altruistic facade of the Russian intelligentsia. Starting with The Insulted and Injured in 1861, and ending with The Brothers Karamazov in 1879, he systematically attacked the self-imposed isolation of the intelligentsia, who lived in their ivory tower, quite removed from the realities of Russian life. Apart from their ignorance, Dostoevsky also relentlessly ridiculed their idleness, lack of purpose and organisation, their fanatical idealism, and the moral decay which resulted from their rejection of Christian values. The protagonists of the novels he penned during these two decades, show in minute detail the frightening effects of what Dostoevsky perceived as the decline of an entire generation of young Russian intellectuals.

5a Moral disintegration, rootlessness and suicide

The feeling of moral disintegration which so outraged Dostoevsky had its roots in the decline of the traditional "sense of honour" of the privileged classes (De Jonge, 1975, p. 89) as well as what De Jonge calls their "growing irresponsibility" and "the emergence of Rothschild and Claude Bernard as culture-heroes".

In his very first novel, Poor Folk, Dostoevsky had already voiced the sentiment that man cannot find fulfillment in material wealth alone, but that it requires a sense of human dignity to round off a personality. As M.P. Devrnja (1972, p. 48) describes it, "misery can seriously degrade a man but poverty is not a sin, and only a spiritual downfall can break him, can cause human existence to appear absurd."

It was, however, in the figure of Prince Valkovsky in The Insulted and Injured, that Dostoevsky found his first true villain, a man who wilfully destroys the lives of others, while considering himself morally and intellectually superior to them, and therefore justified in his actions.

The idea of the morally independent man is developed further in Notes from Underground in which the hero, his mind filled with the Romantic writings of European authors, is unable to respond naturally to any situation.

He is convinced that he is intellectually superior to everyone around him, but finds that he depends on their recognition of his supposed qualities. In the end he comes to hate himself for his inability to divorce himself from this need for acknowledgement. His final perception of himself is that of a man who is "morally and socially bankrupt" (Jackson in Jackson, 1984, p. 78).

The "underground man" encounters the prostitute Liza, who offers him real acceptance and understanding, but is unable to return either because of his moral disintegration. In the words of Joseph Frank (in Miller, 1986, p. 60), the incident "reveals all the shabbiness of the intelligentsia's 'ideals' when confronted with spontaneous and unselfish love".

In his notes on Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky expressed the central idea of his planned novel in the following phrases: "Russia's disintegration in the post-reform period", "degeneration of the Russian family, general chaos, confusion and collapse, constant breakdown", "our moral principles shaken to their foundations", "the right to be dishonourable", and "intellectual unrest and lack of moral direction" (Grossman, 1962, p. 525).

Dostoevsky regarded his protagonist, Raskolnikov, as representative of "a general moral disintegration" (De Jonge, 1975, p. 87). Violent crime, which had always been

seen as committed only by the lower classes, is beginning to creep into the educated classes. Raskolnikov's murder of the old pawn-broker is a symbol of the disintegration of his class and, ultimately, of civilisation.

Once again, Raskolnikov is a man who considers himself intellectually superior to others, a "Napoleon" who has become the victim of fate.

In the same novel, the character Svidrigailov represents the alienation of the educated Russian intelligentsia from the people. He is capable of both good and evil, but is entirely empty in a spiritual sense. N.M. Chirkov describes his feelings as "irremediable melancholy and apathy, his absolute scepticism and nihilism" (in Jackson, 1974, p. 63). In the end, this spiritual desolation inevitably leads him to commit suicide.

In The Possessed, Dostoevsky describes the moral disintegration of an entire provincial town. The responsibility for this lies with the so-called "nihilists" or "revolutionaries". In a scene from the novel, a curious onlooker, staring at a suicide victim, makes a strong point (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 303):

A third suddenly blurted out the inquiry why people had begun hanging and shooting themselves among us of late, as though they had suddenly lost their roots, as though the ground were giving way under every one's feet. People looked coldly at this raisonneur.

The phenomenon of suicide as a symbol of moral decay is once again reiterated in The Adolescent, where the young intellectual Kraft commits suicide merely to prove that he is not afraid of taking so drastic a step, and that he therefore stands above common morality by virtue of his inner strength.

Dostoevsky directly associated the shallowness and moral emptiness of the intelligentsia with their rejection of the Christian value system. He maintained that whenever man attempted to rely only on himself for moral guidance, this would inevitably lead to failure, as expressed in moral decay, a lack of direction and, in extreme cases, suicide.

5 b Idleness

The concept of the "superfluous man", a member of the upper classes who, because of the injustice of the Russian system, could find no suitable outlet for his talents and abilities, arose in the 18th century. This feeling of "superfluity" among the educated classes was characterised by boredom. The absence of real problems and suffering, especially for the absentee landlords at the time, brought about the kind of boredom which Madaule (in Jackson, 1974, p. 47) described as "a veritable sickness of the soul".

The Russian philosopher and social critic Herzen regarded the superfluous man as "the first manifestation of a Russian public opinion" (Dryzhakova, 1979, p. 68). Dostoevsky, however, treated them with an irony bordering on contempt, writing "I cannot understand how an intelligent man, at any time and in any circumstances, can fail to find some kind of activity."

The social reforms in Russia in the 1860s had, in Dostoevsky's opinion, made it possible to find honourable employment there in an attempt to resolve the social and moral problems of the country. Frank (1986, pp. 62, 63) mentions that Dostoevsky called upon the superfluous men "to abandon their pride and egoism once and for all and devote themselves wholeheartedly to the humdrum task of bettering the lot of their fellow Russians through the

patient reconstruction of Russian life." In the end even Herzen had to agree that "one who does not find work now has no one else to blame for it."

It appears, then, that the boredom of the intellectual was a self-inflicted evil. University graduates had no difficulty finding work in the 1860s, with employment readily available in sectors such as teaching and medicine. The problem rather seemed to lie with the overwhelmingly impractical education of these members of the liberal intelligentsia, which hardly prepared them for a life of service to the people.

A prime example of such a liberal "intelligent" is Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky in The Possessed, who is described as follows: "... on completing his studies at the university six years before, [Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky] had hung about in Petersburg without getting work." While Verkhovensky is liberally supplied with money by his father, though, the same unwillingness to work can be found among members of the poorer educated classes. Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment has abandoned his studies and lives a life of boredom and idleness despite his extreme poverty.

In line with Dostoevsky's Christian beliefs, idleness is thus regarded as being at the root of moral decay. A lack of useful employment leads to a lack of direction in life

and ultimately to the disintegration of a person's character.

5 c Materialism

In his work Dostoevsky and the Age of Intensity, Alex de Jonge writes: "In most societies, at most times, man is motivated by something beyond immediate self-interest, but for Dostoevsky the 19th century was an age in which the pecuniary ethic had become the sole imperative." The embodiment of this theory is Prince Valkovsky in The Insulted and Injured, of whom it is said that "he knows no law but that of his own appetites" (Yarmolinsky, 1971, p. 146). Prince Valkovsky openly advocates the philosophy of materialism, disdainfully remarking to the narrator of the novel: "Poverty is all the fashion with you, now, lost coats, inspectors, quarrelsome officers, clerks, old times, dissenters ..." (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 311). His son tries to explain his father's greed by reasoning: "It's not his fault that he's used to estimating happiness in millions. They're all like that." (Dostoevsky, s.a., p.126). "They" in this case refers to his father's age group, rather than his social class - Alyosha is referring to the generation gap between the capitalist, materialistic fathers compared to the more altruistic, socialist-orientated sons.

Both Prince Valkovsky and Dolgoruky in The Adolescent regard the fabulously wealthy German banker Rothschild as a model - a symbol of the success of the capitalist world. Dostoevsky provides his reader with an antithesis to this

materialist hero; his Prince Myshkin in The Idiot is a gentle and Christ-like figure who "constitutes an unspoken rebuke to materialistic, self-seeking civilization" (De Jonge, 1975, p. 74).

Dostoevsky juxtaposed the grasping materialism of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie with the supposed "contentment" of the peasant. This view was, in fact, quite out of keeping with the facts. Ever since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the peasant class had been engaged in a continuous struggle for land and material possessions.

5 d Ignorance and vanity

When Dostoevsky chose to castigate his heroes, he tended to turn to the subject of their intellectual vanity. His "underground man" already showed signs of this disease of the age, which seemed to engulf the Russian intellectual even more than his Western counterpart because, as a result of censorship and geographical isolation, he tended to be more ignorant of international trends. Joseph Frank described the problem thus (1986, p. 335):

As a result of imbibing the European culture popular in Russia in the 1840s, the underground man, it becomes clear, has lost any capacity for simple and direct human feeling in relation to others. Instead, his vanity and sense of self-importance have become inflated to a degree out of all proportion to his actual social situation ...

The "underground man", in attempting to prove that he is not subject to emotions such as shame and humiliation, actually demonstrates how much these emotions have enslaved him.

Dostoevsky was fascinated with the idea of the isolated individual who, divorced from reality, falls victim to his own sense of self-importance and pride. Two years after his Notes from Underground, the subject surfaced again in Crime and Punishment. This time it became the focal point of the novel.

Raskolnikov, the hero (or rather anti-hero) of the novel, shows all the characteristics of an isolated but infinitely proud individual. He has left the university without completing his studies, yet his half-baked humanitarian ideals seem to him to be the pinnacle of philosophic thought. He is destitute, yet he refuses to seek work. He has to endure the shame of creeping like a cat past his landlady's door because he is in arrears with the rent payments for his dingy room, yet he feels infinitely superior to her. Idleness and isolation heighten his vanity, until his vague hunger for power and his wish to rise above the masses lead him to murder.

In his vanity, Raskolnikov comes to regard himself as one of the few "extraordinary people", those who supposedly stand above common morality and the law, and who have the right to exercise their power over others if they think fit. Raskolnikov excuses their excesses by arguing that they aim at "the destruction of the present for the sake of the better". It is this theory with which he justifies his crime. The crime itself will serve a purpose, however. It is "one of those acts which one must commit to be sure of escaping the limits of ordinary humanity" (Madaule in Jackson, 197, p. 43).

After his crime, however, Raskolnikov finds that he is as much subject to human emotions as everyone else. Tortured by guilt and fear, he finally confesses his crime. Even

his confession and prison life, however, cannot change him. At the end of the novel he is as unrepentant and proud as ever, thinking that his only mistake lay in his failure to succeed in keeping quiet.

The only other character in the novel who, like Raskolnikov, believes in the supreme power of "superior" human beings, and who uses it to justify his evil deeds, is Svidrigailov, who ultimately commits suicide.

Although some critics accused Dostoevsky of over-dramatising a fictitious and quite improbable situation, it appears that quite a number of young men identified very strongly with the character of Raskolnikov, even going so far as to plan similar crimes (Kjetsaa, 1987, p. 184).

The combination of ignorance with vanity is carried further in The Possessed, where Stepan Verkhovensky boasts about his French education, which in reality turns out to have been clearly second-rate. He is a typical liberal intellectual of the 1840s, with what Dostoevsky himself described as "a flair for high-sounding phrases". He is far removed from real Russian life, but his vanity leads him to believe that he is "persecuted" by the Russian government.

Another symbol of ignorance in The Possessed, but this time with less vanity to match, is the character Virginsky and his family of whom the following is said (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 25):

His wife and all the ladies of his family professed the very latest convictions, but in rather a crude form. ... They got it all out of books, and at the first hint coming from any of our little progressive corners in Petersburg they were prepared to throw anything overboard, so soon as they were advised to do so.

The radical intelligentsia considered themselves morally superior to the people, preferring to see their own future role as that of leaders to an amorphous mass of followers. This type of intellectual vanity was primarily a result of the intelligentsia's ignorance of the realities of Russian life as they discussed theories and philosophies in splendid isolation from the masses.

5 e Alienation from Christianity

Although Dostoevsky had long been acquainted with the early forms of socialism as propagated by Herzen and Chernyshevsky, his first personal brush with the wider effects of socialist thinking came during his lengthy sojourn in Europe in the early 1860s. In his Winter Notes on Summer Impressions, he attacks the "westernism" of the younger generation of educated Russians, which he regarded as incompatible with the basic laws of Christianity, and especially with the peculiar Russian brand of Christianity which Malia (1961, p. 367) calls an "innate respect for authority founded on divine or ideal sanctions".

Dostoevsky regarded as dangerous the theory of "rational egoism" which led the so-called "westerners" to a new concept of morality. Rogers describes the effects of atheism as follows (1957, p. 16):

As the estimate of man's role in the universe shrank, the dimensions accorded to his moral nature diminished correspondingly. What had been regarded as sin, an offense against the Creator of the universe, became, in the new dispensation, "antisocial conduct", the roots of which were to be sought, not within the individual himself, but in the social context of which he was part.

Dostoevsky systematically attacked this theory in Crime and Punishment, showing that the mere disregard of traditional morality does not mean that it no longer exists. His chief character, Raskolnikov, has been formed by radical Western

thought and atheism. In the words of Rogers (1957, p. 73) he:

... rejects, quite consistently, the whole of that morality which has been built upon the belief in God as a Supreme Being and Lawgiver. He divides humanity into those few 'supermen' who are strong enough to dispense with God and to accept the new gospel of 'beyond good and evil'; and into the common herd who are too cowardly to discard the old beliefs and moral values.

This division of mankind into two types is not only essentially an atheistic idea, it also makes Raskolnikov a moral Nihilist, "a man who strives to act without principle and to be unscrupulous, who desires to put himself beyond and above human moral conventions" (Baring, 1910, p. 120). His intended victim is an apparently "worthless" member of society, a grasping pawnbroker. In Raskolnikov's view, the removal of this person would actually be of benefit to society. Not only does this first murder lead to the slaughter of another - quite innocent - human being in the form of the pawnbroker's mentally retarded sister, though, it also turns out that Raskolnikov is not able to place himself above the moral consequences of his deed.

The antithesis to this unyielding atheism is found in Russian Orthodox Christianity, which in Crime and Punishment is personified in the character of Sonya, who believes in the necessity of suffering to restore order. Dostoevsky spent some time thinking about this idea, as

may be seen from a passage taken from his notes (in Krag, 1962, p. 125): "There is no happiness in comfort; happiness is bought with suffering. Man is not born for happiness. Man earns his happiness, and always through suffering. In this there is no injustice." The root of this idea may be found in Dostoevsky's experience of exile, which for him and many of his fellow prisoners led to a religious conversion. In Dostoevsky, according to Ward (1986, p. 37), the concept of order is linked to religion because in history religion had always been the most important medium for maintaining order.

Dostoevsky subsequently developed his association of "goodness" with religious faith and "badness" with atheism in his later novels, all of which contrast "good" characters such as Sonya, Prince Myshkin (The Idiot), Makar Dolgoruky (The Adolescent) and Alyosha and Father Zossima (The Brothers Karamazov) with "bad" characters such as Pyotr Verkhovensky (The Possessed) and Old Karamazov (The Brothers Karamazov).

Even before Crime and Punishment, though, Dostoevsky had come to regard the simple, God-fearing Russian peasant as the backbone of society, and as the upholder of morality. On the other side of the spectrum were the representatives of the intelligentsia who, in the words of Kjetsaa (1987, p. 328), had "renounced Russian ideals in favour of West European ideas".

Jacques Madaule describes Dostoevsky's idea of a schism between the intelligentsia and the common people in an article entitled "Raskolnikov" (in Jackson, 1974, pp. 42, 43). Dostoevsky feared that the upper classes of society had turned their back on Christianity, and therefore on the common people. They had embraced the Western value system to such an extent that they could no longer even communicate with the majority of people in their own country. Nevertheless they had retained some peculiar Russian characteristics, leading to a feeling of dissatisfaction and uncertainty, as they could identify neither with the Western world nor with their own Russian ancestry.

Crime and Punishment was the first of Dostoevsky's novels in which he presented the image of atheism, like a disease, infecting the minds of intellectuals. Five years later, in The Possessed, he carries the image further. This time the disease has spread to the mindless followers of atheistic intellectuals. The model for Pyotr Verkhovensky, the leading figure of the book, was the political conspirator Nechaev, an unscrupulous and dangerous fanatic of the 1860s, who did not hesitate to stoop to murder to ensnare his followers in a web of guilt. In the novel, Pyotr Verkhovensky is an ambitious political agitator whose aim is to sow disorder, which would ultimately give him a chance to seize power.

The other characters in the novel all expound their own form of atheism. The views of Kirillov, one of the conspirators, are described as follows by Rogers (1957, p. 76):

Kirillov and his co-conspirators make the annihilation of God a primary step in their program ... In this organization of mankind statistics and economic needs will supply the place once held in society by the moral code. This transformation shall extend from society to the individual.

Ironically, Kirillov ultimately commits suicide, merely to prove that God does not exist.

His fellow conspirator Shigalev, takes Nihilism to its extreme. Verkhovensky explains his theory as follows (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 417):

In his system, every member of society has an eye on every one else. To tell tales is a duty. The individual belongs to the community and the community belongs to the individual. All are slaves and equal in their bondage. Calumny and assassination can be used in extreme cases, but the most important thing is equality. The first necessity is to lower the level of culture, science and talent. A high scientific level is only accessible to superior intellects, and we don't want superior intellects. Men gifted with high capacities have always seized upon power and become despots. Highly gifted men cannot help being despots, and have always done more harm than good. They must be exiled or executed. Cicero's tongue must be cut out, Copernicus' eyes must be blinded, Shakespeare must be stoned. That is Shigalevism.

It was this type of radicalism which Dostoevsky regarded as the logical consequence of atheism. To him, the authors of the literature which formed the basis for this type of

thinking were possessed by devils. He regarded it as alien to Russian culture and thinking, which in his mind was firmly tied to the Orthodox Church. In the novel the character Stavrogin voices this opinion when he says: "... an atheist can't be a Russian ... an atheist at once ceases to be a Russian" (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 228).

The salvation of the Russian intelligentsia, in Dostoevsky's view, lay in its "spiritual merger" with the peasantry, a theory he was to uphold to the very end of his life. By 1870, already, he saw it as his duty to remind people that Christianity was man's only hope, and that the so-called "enlightenment" would lead to the ruin of Russia and of civilisation itself. During a conversation in about 1880, Dostoevsky was asked why he regarded the Russian religion as superior to all other religions. His reply was: "Go and see the peasant who is sitting in your kitchen. Then you will surely find out." In his last public speech in April 1880, Dostoevsky "prophesied reconciliation between the rebellious Russian intelligentsia and the humble and religious Russian people" (Walicki, 1977, p. 34).

Consequently, in his following novel, The Adolescent, it is the simple and devout pilgrim Makar, who embodies the religious faith of the Russian people. He has more insight into human nature than the aristocrat Versilov who, in the words of Kjetsaa (1987, p. 294), "has become a victim of

the upper classes' moral disintegration".

In his last novel, The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky summarises his ideology and speaks out against what Tschizewskij (1978, p. 219) calls "Western individualism and the Western secularization of culture". Ivan Karamazov is a subtle intellectual with powerful arguments. He is not entirely an atheist, because he acknowledges the existence of God, but sees Him as subordinate to His creation, the universe itself. He sets out his views in his "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", in which he questions the purpose of religious faith.

His counterpart is his brother Alyosha, a realist whose religion "was based on common sense" (Baring, 1910, p. 154). He stands for the acceptance of God and immortality, which Dostoevsky equated with freedom. Dostoevsky here sets forth the view that "revolt against God could bring about only a total destruction of freedom and that true freedom is possible only in Christ who has said that man lives not by bread alone" (Walicki, 1977, p. 35).

Dostoevsky often introduced a "religious" figure in his works to show the importance of a Christian value system in comparison with the primarily atheistic views of the socialist intelligentsia. In Crime and Punishment, this role is fulfilled by the unlikely heroine Sonya, whose religious faith ultimately triumphs over Raskolnikov's

atheism. In The Adolescent it is the devout pilgrim Makar who provides the counterbalance to the worldly Versilov, and in The Brothers Karamazov the figure of Father Zosima sustains a religious link with the other characters.

5 f Idealism, insecurity and obsession

From his vantage point in the 1860s, Dostoevsky could look back at his own youth and the era of the 1840s with a touch of irony and satire. Joseph Frank discusses this time of retrospection as follows (1986, p. 333):

It was a period, as he saw it, when the Russian intelligentsia had turned itself inside out so as to conform to the ideological prescriptions coming from abroad: "Everything then was done according to principle, we lived according to principle, and were terribly afraid to do anything not in conformity with the new ideas" ... The 1840s had thus fostered its own kind of egoism and vanity, which allowed the 'superfluous men' of the gentry-liberal intelligentsia to live in a dream world of 'universal beneficence' while neglecting the simplest and most obvious moral obligations.

Among the lower ranks of the gentry, however, this self-confident exterior often covered deep-rooted feelings of insecurity and inferiority. In The Adolescent, Dostoevsky describes the hero's anguish, borne of his feeling of social insecurity in the company of the sons of the aristocracy at his boarding-school. When his mother comes to visit him, dressed like a peasant woman, Arkady almost refuses to acknowledge her, but afterwards feels ashamed of himself.

As he grows older and formulates his idea of becoming wealthy like Rothschild, Arkady even admits to giving up reading, because he is worried that he might come across

a passage which opposes his idea, and may make him doubtful. He is also obsessed with the idea that others may look down on him or treat him disrespectfully.

Two other characters who are obsessed with an idea are Stavrogin and Kirillov in The Possessed. Both eventually commit suicide - Stavrogin because he becomes convinced of the senselessness of life in general, and of his own in particular, and Kirillov because he believes that by committing suicide he can prove that he is not afraid of death (Baring, 1910, p. 145): "But they have never been inspired with this idea. They have always killed themselves out of fear, and never in order to kill fear. He who will kill himself simply in order to kill fear, he will be God."

The trait of obsession is also obvious in the former serf Shatov, who has become involved with the conspirators almost against his will. Of him Dostoevsky says at the beginning of the book (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 62):

He is one of those Russian Idealists whom any strong idea strikes all of a sudden, and on the spot annihilates his will, sometimes for ever. They are never able to react against the idea. They believe in it passionately, and the rest of their life passes as though they were writhing under a stone which was crushing them.

Apart from being obsessed with an idea, Shatov is also proud (he refuses financial help) and insecure, changing from one extreme of ardent socialist belief to the other

extreme of complete rejection of all it stood for.

In The Possessed, Pyotr Verkhovensky sums up the feelings of insecurity of the liberal intelligentsia of the time, when he says (Dostoevsky, s.a., p. 483):

The principal strength, the element which binds everything, is the fear of public opinion, the fear of having an opinion of one's own. It is with just such people that success is possible. I tell you they would throw themselves into the fire if I told them to do so, if I ordered it. I would only have to say that they were bad Liberals.

Dostoevsky thus makes it quite clear that he considered the members of the intelligentsia to be non-individualists, people without any personal moral convictions, who could only exist and function as a group, and who expected their leaders to provide the value system they lacked.

5 g Isolation and the disintegration of family life

Dostoevsky was fascinated with the concept of suffering, especially moral and emotional suffering, resulting from the isolation of a human being, and from feelings of guilt and inferiority. He described social phenomena such as suicide, alcoholism, idleness and the disintegration of family life, seeing them as special manifestations of urban life. Fanger describes his outlook thus (1965, p. 202):

By and large, Dostoevsky's families tend to be parodies of what is usually understood by that word. ... It may be taken as a general rule that, when families do appear in Dostoevsky's fiction, they tend to be shown in process of dissolution. The city, sociologically speaking, is largely responsible for this dissolution; and so, for literary purposes, it makes the ideal background for dramas of isolation.

In addition to isolation, there may be disease, either physical, psychological or moral, and together they create fear. In the isolation of the tiny rooms inhabited by Dostoevsky's protagonists, this fear grows, until it becomes all-consuming. An early example in Dostoevsky's work is the short-story Mr. Prokharchin, the story of an elderly civil servant of low rank who fears the sordid and gloomy reality of his life in a tiny corner of his landlady's apartment.

The same insecurity and fear of reality haunts the protagonist of Notes from Underground, a lonely cynic, whose problem is summed up as follows by Bruce Ward (1986, p. 40):

The ennui, the vague yet persistent anxiety, the sense of alienation, the degrading and self-destructive impulses which this 'modern intellectual' chronicles himself with such 'lucidity of perception' are all symptomatic of a profound personal disorder. For the 'lucidity of perception' or 'heightened consciousness', which the underground-man regards as the cause of his paralysing illness is tantamount to the absence of an idea of life sufficiently clear and powerful to govern his consciousness and bring his contradictory impulses into some sort of order.

The ultimate isolated figure in Dostoevsky's work is of course Raskolnikov, the hero of Crime and Punishment. Like the "underground man", Raskolnikov withdraws from the world, its laws and principles, in order to justify his ill-conceived ideas. Instead of conquering his fears by committing murder as he had hoped, his sense of alienation is merely increased by his deed. In a letter to his publisher in 1865, Dostoevsky described why Raskolnikov finally confesses his crime (in Grossman, 1962, p. 350):

He is compelled to do this, for even if he is to perish in prison, he will be in touch with people again; the feeling of being isolated and separated from mankind, which he began to experience immediately after he had committed the crime, had tortured him beyond endurance. The law of truth and human nature has won out. The criminal himself resolves to accept suffering and thereby atone for his deed.

Raskolnikov's isolation is partially due to his self-inflicted withdrawal from his friends and his family. Alex de Jonge writes that Raskolnikov "positively revels" in his state of total withdrawal" (1975, p. 113). Dostoevsky blames the city for furthering the disintegration of family life (De Jonge, 1975, p. 62):

The city is the place in which people live alone, apart from the rest of their family; the only relationship into which they enter with their neighbours is a non-relationship founded upon a lack of interest and anonymity. Thus Raskolnikov lives in virtual isolation. The effect of his crime is to increase that isolation, cutting him off from his family and rendering him incapable of communicating with them. The city is equally responsible for the disintegration of the Marmeladov ménage. The daughter becomes a whore in order to support the rest of the family. Consequently she must leave home.

In The Idiot, Prince Myshkin, too, is isolated by virtue of his epileptic fits and the fact that he has no immediate family. In this case Dostoevsky generalises, expounding the view that isolation is the destiny of the educated and civilised human being. De Jonge (1975, p. 115) sums up this view as follows:

This sense of anguished isolation, the traumatic realisation that you are alone, without the support of any kind of family or community, was the price the individual from Romanticism on, had to pay for his state of culture.

Dostoevsky believed that by engaging in abstract thinking and theories, the intellectuals had isolated themselves from the people they professed to serve. This hypothesis is highlighted in The Possessed, where the patriotic ex-serf Shatov, a former student, tells his wife that "he is a Slavophile because he cannot be a Russian" (Howe in Miller, 1986, p.141).

Another topic which interested Dostoevsky was that of the "accidental family", the members of which lack cohesion to such a degree that the word "family" actually becomes incongruous. The Karamazov family is such an accidental family. The father has had little contact with his children over the years. The three sons themselves differ widely in their outlook on life, and the final shadow of parricide, committed by an illegitimate son, makes mockery of any reference to a family.

In The Adolescent, Arkady Dolgoruky is described as "a casual member of a casual family". He is what de Jonge calls "the embodiment of the new rootlessness, the new disinherited" (1975, p. 111). Geir Kjetsaa writes that Dostoevsky wished to present an antithesis to Tolstoy's portrayal of family life, that "beautiful life-form that is proper to his aristocratic heroes" (1987, p. 291).

Marriage and the traditional family were concepts attacked by the liberal intelligentsia as being not in keeping with

socialist views. Partially this was due to their desire for the emancipation of women, because within the traditional family the woman was still invariably tied to the home and to childcare activities. On the other hand, however, the traditional family provided emotional and financial security, which the intelligentsia regarded as unnecessary. Their views were thus based on the assumption that individuals had the moral strength to live in isolation, an assumption which Dostoevsky contemptuously dismissed. To prove his point, Dostoevsky's heroes tend to come from unhappy or disintegrating families, and in Raskolnikov's case it is his very isolation which causes him to conceive the unsound ideas which lead to his murder of the pawnbroker.

5 h A lack of organisation and a sense of purpose

'No words can describe the rubbish which these gentlemen, these socialists and revolutionaries, whom I now met for the first time - not in a book but in life - talked from the platform to an audience of five thousand people. No description can convey any ideal of it. The farce, the feebleness, the confusion, the discord, the mutual contradictions - it is simply inconceivable. And it is this rabble that is stirring up the unhappy worker. It is very sad!' With these words, Dostoevsky described his disappointment with the intellectual elite of Western Europe, after attending a congress of the League for Peace and Freedom in Geneva in September 1867. It appeared to him that the only thing the delegates to this congress had in common, was 'their opposition to the established order' (Krag, 1962, p. 177).

Four years later, Dostoevsky was to portray this negative experience in The Possessed, where the revolutionary quintet launched by Pyotr Verkhovensky is equally disorganised and aimless. Shatov, a former member of the group, points this out when he says (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 204): "They've brought out leaflets, they're on the point of quarrelling. Virginsky is a universal humanity man, Liputin is a Fourierist with a marked inclination for police work."

The revolutionaries sense danger around every corner, as they mistakenly believe that their organisation is of sufficient consequence to warrant police action. Another former member, Nikolay Stavrogin, says of them (Dostoevsky, 1931, p. 223):

I took some part in reorganizing the society, on the new plan, but that was all. But now they've changed their views, and have made up their minds that it would be dangerous to let me go, and I believe I'm sentenced to death too.

Captain Lebyadkin, who once worked for the group, pronounces the most damning judgement on it (Dostoevsky, p. 248):

... what revolted me most was that this was utterly opposed to civic, and still more to patriotic laws. They suddenly printed that men were to go out with pitchforks, and to remember that those who went out poor in the morning might go home rich at night. Only think of it! It made me shudder, and yet I distributed it. Or suddenly five or six lines addressed to the whole of Russia, apropos of nothing, 'Make haste and lock up the churches, abolish God, do away with marriage, destroy the right of inheritance, take up your knives,' that's all, and God knows what it means.

Throughout his later novels, Dostoevsky therefore derided the intelligentsia's lack of organisation and their tendency to panic in emergencies. Starting with Raskolnikov, who is unable to cope with the mental after-effects of his deed and ultimately gives himself up, Dostoevsky traced this line of thought through his subsequent works. The revolutionaries in The Possessed panic during the murder of Shatov and the whole of The Brothers Karamazov is pervaded by a sense of agitation and hysteria, particularly on the part of Dmitry Karamazov.

Conclusion

Overall Dostoevsky sketched a damning portrait of the liberal intelligentsia of his time in his major novels, written in the 1860s and 1870s. This period coincided with a time of social and economic transition in Russia which led to the birth of Russian socialism. Although Dostoevsky was able to understand the essence of the historical era in which he lived, however, and managed to reflect its promises, catastrophes and profound changes in his works, the following has been said about him (Andrew, 1982, p. 97):

The greatest irony and tragedy of Dostoevsky's life and work was the discrepancy between his startling insights and explorations into the divided world of nineteenth-century man and his society, and his remarkably banal and unoriginal remedies for this crisis.

Indeed, as the conflict between the radical intelligentsia and the State escalated, the conservatives - and foremost among them the ageing Dostoevsky - tended to suspend all criticism of the government. They distrusted capitalism and large-scale industry and supported rural communal crafts associations. Along with his peers, Dostoevsky also became more anti-Semitic and generally xenophobic. He grew to despise the intelligentsia as a group, writing about them in the late 1870s: "The whole intelligentsia of Russia, from Peter the Great onwards, has never involved

itself in the direct current interests of Russia, but has always been concerned with abstract European nonsense" (in Dryzhakova, 1979, p. 79). Until his death, Dostoevsky retained the view that the intelligentsia should spiritually reconcile itself with the Russian peasantry, learning from them the virtues of humility and Christian values.

Thus, near the end of his life, Dostoevsky, once a hot-headed young radical and fighter for the oppressed masses, came to identify himself with a stagnant and corrupt regime - far more corrupt than the young Western democracies which he criticised so vehemently during his later years. By the time of his death, the radical Russian critics had come to regard him as an enemy of democratic ideals.

The foregoing study of his major novels, written during his mature period between 1861 and 1879, shows that this view was indeed justified. Starting with The Insulted and Injured in 1861 and culminating with his work The Brothers Karamazov in 1879, Dostoevsky increasingly revealed himself as a staunch supporter of the conservative autocracy.

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